

Community Building Activities

A Note about Reflection:

While participating in the activities themselves is an important part of practicing and cultivating social-emotional skills and team building, it is just as important to reflect and debrief the activity. Some typical questions for debriefing an activity might be:

- What did you notice about the activity?
- What went well? What was easy about it? Why was that easy?
- What didn't go so well? What was challenging? Why was that challenging?
- What did we have to do in order to be successful?
- What did we learn?
- How might what we learned apply to other things we do?
- What might we do differently if we had another chance to do this?

Activity: Ball Toss

Purpose: To re-focus the group	Ideal Group Size: 5-15
Skills: listening, observing, quick thinking	Space: enough space to move around comfortably
Time: 5-7 minutes	Supplies: Make shift (crumpled paper taped into the shape of a ball) or real ball

Description: A re-centering and team building activity to get participants moving and energized.

Directions:

- Ask the group to make a circle.
- Ask the group how many times they can keep the ball in the air without it dropping, this becomes the goal.
- Toss the ball until the group reaches or surpasses the goal.

Facilitator Tips:

- To vary the activity, people can only touch no more than five times, this creates a higher level of awareness and communication with who the ball is tossed to.

Activity: Blizzard

Purpose: to build trust among teammates	Ideal Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: cooperation, coordination, empathy, problem solving, listening, patience, trust	Space: large empty space
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: various items for obstacles (optional), blindfold (optional)

Description: A trust activity with many “obstacles” in the way, a great way to build empathy, listening and understanding.

Directions:

- In this activity four to six participants will be human obstacles, while the rest of the group will be split into pairs. Explain that the space will be transformed into an obstacle course that people will need to negotiate. Ask for volunteers to be the “obstacles”, then place them strategically around the room and help them to create the course. This may include stepping over a volunteer (or frozen log), crawling under a table or stepping through a hoop or some sort (ice cave), walking between two people who are standing close together (crevasse), being held in mid-air (climbing in and out of the survival tent), avoiding a person pacing back and forth (snow plow), or stopping at a station to complete a task (like singing “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer”).
- Break the group into pairs. Explain that there has been a terrible blizzard in the room. Partner 1 can still see, but Partner 2 is snow blind (they must close their eyes or wear a blindfold).
- Have each pair line up at the beginning of the course. The activity begins when the pairs navigate their way through the “blizzard.”
- The participants who can see must lead the blinded participants through both the blizzard and obstacles safely. (Depending on the group, allow the guides to lead their partners by touching them lightly on the shoulders or instruct them to use only words.)
- Send pairs through at staggered intervals so participants do not bump into each other. Remind guides to watch not only their partner but other groups, as well. The activity ends when each pair has successfully completed the course. Switch roles after one round.

Facilitator Tips:

- Some participants will have their eyes closed (and, as a result, be more vulnerable), set clear safety guidelines so that they take responsibility for each other.
- Some ways to vary the activity: Have the group direct people through the blizzard. Choose a volunteer to be blindfolded and help them to the starting line. Have another player volunteer to be their “spotter” and follow them, making sure that they are safe at all times but explain that the spotter may not give directions. When this becomes too chaotic, freeze the activity and have the blindfolded player explain what was easy or hard and what she or he needs to be successful.

Activity: Big Wind Blows

Purpose: to demonstrate the similarities in a group; to learn something new about each other	Ideal Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: gross motor movement, quick thinking, identifying similarities and differences, observation	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: chairs or tape (optional)

Description: An active get to know you activity that requires quick thinking and switching places.

Directions:

- Arrange chairs in a circle, but make sure that there is one less chair than the total number of people.
- Everyone should begin the activity sitting in their chair, with one person in the center.
- The person in the center of the circle begins by saying, “The Big Wind Blows for anyone who...” and adds something that is true about them. Examples could include “...has a little sister...”, “is wearing socks”, “likes purple”, and so on.
- Anyone who shares that trait must then walk slowly from their spot to another spot in the circle, moving at least two spaces over from their original spot. This will leave one person in the middle without a spot in the circle, who then repeats the process: “The Big Wind Blows for anyone who..”

Facilitator Tips:

- For a challenge, the person in the middle may say, “Breadbasket”, meaning that everyone must get up and find a new seat.
- When playing with young children, using the phrase, “I like people who...” is simpler and more affirming than “The Big Wind Blows...” Younger children may also want to stay in the middle and be “it.” Remind them that lots of participants should get a chance to be in the middle.
- The activity ends when time has run out, when participants are ready for the next activity or when everyone has had a turn.
- This activity may be played with tape instead of chairs(participants mark their spot in the circle with a piece of tape)

Activity: Car and Driver

Purpose: to build trust amongst the group	Ideal Group Size: 10-50
Skills: cooperation, trust, taking risks, leadership, communication	Space: enough space for partners to move around the space without “crashing” (outside is ideal)
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Pairs elect to be either “car” or “driver” and take turns leading and following. The aim of the driver is to keep the car safe and avoid collisions.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make pairs. Ask them to designate Partner 1 and Partner 2. Partner 1 will be the car and will close their eyes and cross their arms over their chest, to be “driven” by their partner.. Partner 2 will be the driver and stand behind the car with one index finger on each of their partner’s shoulders.
- Directions to drivers on how to operate the car: to move the car straight place a finger on each of the car’s shoulders, place one finger on the right shoulder for a right turn, place one finger on the left shoulder for a left turn and lift both fingers up to stop the car.
- Ask pairs to switch roles after a few minutes.

Activity: Cooperative Musical Chairs

Purpose: to work as a team to accomplish a complex task	Ideal Group Size: 10-15 people
Skills: cooperation, trust, inclusion, problem solving	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: chairs, speaker, music

Description: Instead of having a person eliminated from the activity, as in typical musical chairs-when a player does not find a seat, participants must work together to make space for everyone.

Directions:

- Ask participants to take a chair and form a circle so that people are facing out (away from the circle).
- Start the music and ask participants to walk around the circle or row, just like musical chairs. Stop the music periodically. Everyone must sit down and the group needs to figure out how to include everyone.
- The activity continues, and after each round a chair is removed.

Facilitator Tips:

- Before playing, emphasize rules about safety and respect. Be aware of the group’s comfort level.
- If there is no space to form a circle, form two rows of chairs (back to back).
- As chairs start to disappear, observe how the group works together. If necessary, suggest some ideas such as two people sharing a seat or a player (or two or three or more) sitting on another player’s knees. The activity continues until all the participants are sitting in one or two seats.

Activity: Cross the Line

Purpose: to create awareness and listen intently	Ideal Group Size: 10-100 people
Skills: cooperation, communication, coordination, inclusion, team building, empathy, compassion	Space: a space large enough to create one long, straight line.
Time: 15-25 minutes	Supplies: rope (or chalk if playing outside)

Description: A visual “get to know you” activity that promotes a deeper level of understanding through sharing and listening.

Directions:

- Lay a rope (or draw a line with chalk) to create a boundary. Ask participants to stand on one side.
- Facilitator will call out various statements and ask participants to cross the line if it pertains to them. *“I’m going to call out a statement. If the statement relates to you, please step over to the other side of the rope (or imaginary boundary) turn around and face those on the other side, allow yourself to be seen and see others, then when I say, “Switch”, you’ll go back to the side you’re all standing on now.”*
- Examples of some statements for Cross the Line: *“Cross the Line if....”* you’ve ever been mad at a teacher, you have bullied someone, you have been bullied, you have a friend, you have a friend you trust, you have one adult at school you can trust, there is a person in your life you look up to, you have ever been told by someone that you are beautiful/smart/capable...

Facilitator Tips:

- Preface the activity with a short note on confidentiality and holding the space, as people are sharing personal feelings.
- Debriefing is a critical component of this activity.

Activity: Cup and String

Purpose: to work together to complete a task	Ideal Group Size: teams of 2-4 people
Skills: cooperation, problem solving, negotiation, coordination, self-control, communication	Space: tabletop or floor space for multiple teams
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: 6 cups per team, medium sized rubber bands, spool of string or twine, scissors

Description: A team-building exercise that relies on effective communication and innovative thinking to complete the task.

Directions:

- Split the group into teams; plan for four participants per team, one for each string.
- Place six cups and the rubber band tool on the table or floor space, in the middle of each of the teams
- Give each volunteer a string and explain that they must use the tool to stack the cups into a tower.
- Have the group try to move one cup, and point out how each member of the group must adjust the tension they place on the string in order for it to work effectively.
- After the group moves one cup, have them stop. Explain that each group will first try to stack the cups into a tower before being given additional challenges.

Facilitator Tips:

- Before playing, prepare enough rubber band tools for the activity.
- Use four volunteers to demonstrate how the activity should be played.
- Each group will finish at a different pace. Be prepared to have additional challenges ready. Some variations include: Stack cups in a tower, stack cups in a pyramid(three on bottom, two in the middle, one on top), create a unique structure then recreate it using the rubber tool, stack cups without talking, stack cups with one or more participants blindfolded, stack cups with all participants blindfolded- guided by observers standing behind them.
- Rotate around each group observing different strategies and giving new challenges, when appropriate.

Activity: Draw What I Draw

Purpose: to practice active listening and oral communication skills	Ideal Group Size: pairs or small groups
Skills: active listening, patience, giving directions, communication, respect, asking questions, cooperation, creativity	Space: enough space for groups to sit on the floor or around tables/desks
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: pens/pencils, paper, dividers

Description: An artistic activity aimed at cultivating the ability to listen deeply and give thoughtful directions.

Directions:

- Organize the group into pairs and ask them to sit back to back (or have them sit at table with a divider between them). Give each person a blank piece of paper and a pen or pencil.
- Explain that in this activity one person will be describing a picture to their partner, who will have to duplicate the picture based on their partner's description.
- Ask pairs to decide who will describe and who will draw during the first round.
- Ask the describers to draw a simple pattern on their piece of paper. The person trying to duplicate may not ask the describer any questions. When they are finished, ask them to describe the drawing to their partner and help them duplicate it. Switch roles if time permits.
- When pairs are finished working ask them to compare drawings. How are they similar or different? What was easy or difficult about the process?

Facilitator Tips:

- To save time, give the describers a pre-drawn design or image using simple shapes.
- Before beginning, give the group some communication and listening strategies that may be helpful. For example: Give one direction at a time to your partner. By slowing down and communicating clearly, people have a better chance of understanding you. When listening, make sure not to interrupt your partner, so that you can hear the directions clearly and completely. If you have a question, wait until your partner has finished speaking.
- Variations: Instead of pairs, have one person describe a picture to a large group. Seeing how many different people respond to the same set of directions can provide interesting material for discussion. Instead of drawings, use blocks or building materials. Split into pairs or small groups-one half will build and describe a structure and the second half will try to duplicate the structure. Building materials can be anything!

Activity: Embodied/Somatic Memories

Purpose: to reflect and share deeply	Ideal Group Size: 2-40
Skills: reflection, communication	Space: any
Time: 10-30 min	Supplies: blank paper (or “body” template), pens/pencils

Description: A visual activity to share memories and get to know each other more deeply

Directions:

- Either prepare ahead of time or with participants an outline of a body drawn on a blank piece of paper.
- Ask participants to think about where they hold memories in their body. Often these are related to physical injuries but they do not have to be. Ask them to draw an image or write a word that triggers the memory for them (e.g. brain freeze when I had the best ice cream on a hot day; a sports injury that reminds me to slow down when I run; etc.)
- Participants can share their memories in pairs, small groups or in circle.

Facilitator Tips:

- Consider demonstrating both positive and negative memories by modeling first.

Activity: E.T.

Purpose: to strengthen a group’s cohesiveness by building trust	Ideal Group Size: 10-80
Skills: Relationship building, trust	Space: enough space for participants to move comfortably without bumping into each other
Time: 10-15 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Participants rely on touch to lead one another around the space.

Directions:

- Preface the activity with a conversation on trust. Ask participants to break into pairs. Ask them to designate Partner 1 and Partner 2. Partner 1 is E.T. and will lead their partner with their eyes open. Partner 2 will close their eyes and be led by partner 1 around the space.
- Both partners point their index fingers out to one another and keep their fingers connected throughout the activity.
- Ask pairs to switch roles after a few minutes.

Activity: Group Juggle

Purpose: to complete a task collaboratively; to learn names	Ideal Group Size: 5-10 people
Skills: cooperation, communication, coordination, inclusion	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 8-15 minutes	Supplies: 3 or more soft items (e.g. balls or rolled-up socks)

Description: A group juggling activity to learn names and build community.

Directions:

- Explain that the aim of “group juggle” is for the group to work together as a team to keep a few balls in the air at the same time while learning everyone’s names.
- The facilitator starts by taking a ball, choosing someone in the circle, and saying, “Here you go, (name),” before tossing them the ball.
- After each person receives the ball and tosses it to another person, they put their hands behind so everyone knows who has had a turn.
- When everyone has had a turn, the ball is tossed back to the facilitator.
- Explain that the group is going to repeat this same order meanwhile saying, “here you go, (name)” and “thank you, (name)”.

Facilitator Tips:

- Add 2-3 balls after everyone has had at least one turn
- During the debrief of the activity, point out that when people work together, they are often able to accomplish what they cannot individually
- Players should use soft, under-handed tosses only
- If the ball drops, keep going
- During the first round, each person must receive the ball exactly once

Activity: HA HA Game

Purpose: a fun, refocusing activity to raise energy levels	Ideal Group Size: 20-60
Skills: listening, communication, confidence	Space: a space large enough to create a circle and make noise
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Similar to Pass a Clap, the word HA, is verbally passed around the circle, but for each person that says HA, he or she must add the number of Ha's as their position in the circle.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle, ask them to count off individually and remember their number-this is their position in the circle and the number of times they have to say "Ha" in a row.
- Example, the 4th person in the circle says "Ha" 4 times, "ha, ha, ha, ha".
- The activity starts over and goes back to position 1 if anybody laughs.

Facilitator Tips:

- After a group completes the HA round, the facilitator can introduce other sounds: HE, OYE.. etc. with the same instructions.

Activity: Hula Hoop

Purpose: to work together to complete a task	Ideal Group Size: 10-25 people
Skills: cooperation, coordination, encouragement, problem solving, gross motor movement	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: two or more large hula hoops

Description: The objective of the activity is to pass the hula hoop around the entire circle while still holding hands.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle and hold hands.
- The facilitator should have a hula hoop resting on their left shoulder and lying across their chest.
- Each person will need to move their head, arms, and bodies through the Hula Hoop-with help from the people on either side of them-in order to pass the hula hoop around the circle successfully.
- Encourage the group to cheer people on and offer helpful suggestions if someone seems stuck.
- The activity ends when the hula hoop returns to the facilitator.

Facilitator Tips:

- Variation 1-Challenge the group to see how fast they can get the hula hoop around the circle.
- Variation 2-Challenge the group to send two or more hula hoops around the circle at the same time. Start by sending them in the same direction, then send them in opposite directions, meaning that someone will need to cross the two hoops without breaking their grip. (In this case, make sure that one Hula Hoop has a slightly smaller diameter.)
- With any variation, it is also possible to challenge the group to complete the activity silently.

Activity: Human Knot

Purpose: to solve a problem collaboratively	Ideal Group Size: 8-20
Skills: communication, problem-solving, leadership, collaboration	Space: open space for movement (outside or in a circle is ideal)
Time: 3-10 minutes depending on size of the group	Supplies: None

Description: A physical activity where a “human” knot is “untied” and becomes a circle

Directions:

- Ask all participants to stand, facing each other, and to grasp two people’s hands (not the same people). The connected hands will form a “knot.”
- When all hands are connected, ask them to “untie” themselves or to “untangle” the knot, keeping hands connected at all times. Allow participants to discuss and work it out themselves. Physical movement is required (e.g. moving arms over heads, stepping over, turning around, etc.).
- The activity is complete when everyone is “untangled” and all participants are facing each other in a large circle.

Facilitator Tips:

- Consider accommodations for students with physical disabilities
- Encourage students to wear pants or shorts in preparation for this activity

Activity: I am Poem

Purpose: to reflect and share	Ideal Group Size: 4-40
Skills: reflection, speaking, listening, vulnerability	Space: any
Time: 10-20 mins	Supplies: Paper, pens/pencils

Description: This is both an independent and group activity to get to know each other more deeply.

Directions:

- Ask participants to write 8-30 lines of “I am...” Additional sentence starters may be helpful (e.g. “I am from... I am an educator because... I am both ___ and ___... I am open to... I am afraid of... I am hoping to... I want/need/see, etc.)
- Participants can share first in pairs to ease the affective filter and/or can share in a full group (ideally in circle)

Facilitator Tips:

- To encourage depth of reflection and participation, the facilitator may use a quote or group brainstorm to get started. (e.g. “Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage.” - Brene Brown)

Activity: Impulse Chicken

Purpose: to work as a team to complete a simple task	Ideal Group Size: 10-30 people in two teams
Skills: cooperation, patience, non-verbal communication, self-control, trust	Space: enough space for two lines of participants to sit or stand
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: one coin; any soft object(optional)

Description: “Pass the pulse” with an added twist.

Directions:

- Begin by dividing participants into two teams and stand in two straight lines facing each other.
- Stand at one end of the lines and place a ball or a soft object, spaced evenly between the participants, at the opposite end.
- Tell teams to hold hands and explain that the object of the activity is to pass a pulse down the line. Practice this one time by having the participants closest to the facilitator lightly squeeze the hand of the person next to them until the “pulse” reaches the end of the line; make sure that participants do not squeeze hands until they have received the pulse.
- When the person at the end of the line receives a pulse, they must reach out and grab the object. The “winning” team then rotates participants, so that the person at the end (closest to the object) moves to the beginning and everyone shifts down one space.
- Explain that during the activity everyone will have their eyes closed, except for the two people at the beginning of the line. They must have their eyes open to see the coin flip. Hold out a quarter or other coin and show the “heads” and “tails” side of the coin. Explain that the facilitator will flip the coin and that participants should send a pulse only if the coin comes up heads. (If a team sends a pulse when the coin comes up tails, then they must rotate backwards, meaning that the person at the beginning must go back to the end and everyone shifts one space.)
- The activity ends when one team has rotated completely through this line.

Facilitator Tips:

- This relay activity introduces the concept of competition. Emphasize or minimize this aspect of the activity, depending on the maturity of the group. If using it, use the debrief to talk about what it felt like to “win” or “lose” and how to “lose well”.
- Variation 1: if there are an uneven number of participants, have one volunteer sit at the end of the line. Instead of using a soft object that teams must grab, have the volunteer hold out their hands to be lightly tapped and have them determine the “winning” team.
- Variation 2: Instead of having only the winning team rotate, have both teams rotate participants with each round. Decide whether or not to keep points for “winning” teams.

Activity: Kitty Wanna Corner, Ask My Neighbor

Purpose: to develop non-verbal cues and listening skills	Ideal Group Size: 8-60
Skills: strategy, communication, observation	Space: space large enough to hold a circle
Time: 10-15 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: A quick activity of sneaky exchanges to move from one place to the next.

Directions:

- Ask the group to make a circle, ask for a volunteer to stand in the middle. The person in the middle walks up to someone in the circle and says, “Kitty wants a corner”, to which the reply is always, “go ask my neighbor”.
- In the meantime, people in the circle nonverbally agree to switch places in the circle. They must do so without getting attention from the person in center of the circle. If the person in the center sees this switch about to taking place, he or she can take any of the open spots while both people are trying to switch.
- If the center person has successfully gotten into an open spot, whoever is left in the center without a place in the circle, is now the center person and must ask others, “Kitty want a corner” and others must respond, “Ask my neighbor,” until some switch occurs.

Activity: Mailboxes & Notes of Affirmation

Purpose: to appreciate and affirm each other	Ideal Group Size: 5-40
Skills: affirmation, observation, appreciation	Space: counter or floor space to set up bags/boxes
Time: 15 min to set up; various ways to incorporate it	Supplies: paper bags or shoe boxes (more permanent), markers, index cards

Description: A semi-permanent structure where participants can write positive notes to each other.

Directions:

- Ask participants to decorate a paper bag or shoe box with their name and things they like.
- Throughout the day/week/month/year, encourage other participants to observe positive things about the individual/groups and write notes of appreciation and affirmations and place the notes in their bags/boxes.
- Designate time(s) when participants can read their notes.

Facilitator Tips:

- If there are repeated first names in your class, you may want to include last names or initials (for everyone).
- Model how and when you want participants to add affirmations.
- If you see some bags/boxes have fewer notes than others, consider adding to those.

Activity: Mama Bird, Baby Bird

Purpose: to build trust, take risks and build courage	Ideal Group Size: 10-40
Skills: Relationship building, trust, patience	Space: ample space for pairs to move around and make noise
Time: 8-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Partners lead and follow one another through space based on a special sound.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make pairs. Ask them to designate Partner 1 and Partner 2. Partner 1 will act as the mama bird and Partner 2 is the baby bird,
- Partner 1 will share a special sound that partner 2 will attempt to locate in the space with their eyes closed. Partner 1 is in charge of the safety of their baby and must guide them away from colliding with another baby bird.
- Ask pairs to switch roles after a few minutes.

Facilitator Tips: Other pairs will be doing the same thing. It is helpful, but not necessary that pairs have completely different sounds.

Activity: Mystery Clap

Purpose: to work together to complete a task	Ideal Group Size: 15-50 people
Skills: observation, problem solving, non-verbal communication, cooperation, deduction	Space: enough space to form a close(but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: An activity to help the group observe others, focus and solve problems inconspicuously.

Directions:

- Ask participants to sit in a circle and explain that this activity will have a “detective” and a “leader.” The detective will step out of the room while the leader is chosen.
- The leader’s job is to lead the group in a series of rhythms. For example, the group may begin by clapping their hands, but every 10-15 seconds the leader should change this motion. They may snap their fingers, pat their heads, tap their toes, or anything else that the group can imitate. When the leader changes the motion, everyone else in the group should follow.
- Invite the detective back once the leader has been chosen and the group is in a rhythm. The detective will stand in the center of the circle and has three guesses to identify the leader.

Facilitator Tips:

- Anxiety about “getting it right” (for the detective) or “getting caught” (for the leader) can slow this activity down. It may be necessary to remind the leader to change motions regularly or to have the detective take a guess.

Activity: Name Tent

Purpose: to learn names, to build relationships	Ideal Group Size: 5-50
Skills: communication, reflection, creativity, listening	Space: any, though circle is ideal
Time: 5-20 minutes	Supplies: construction paper, markers

Description: A visual activity that allows participants to visually express a little about themselves.

Directions:

- Give each participant a piece of construction paper and a marker (or access to several markers). Ask them to fold the paper lengthwise/hotdog/burrito style and write their preferred name on one side (e.g. first name).
- The facilitator should previously determine what should go on the back, corners, underside, etc. to help participants share more of who they are. For example, they could write on the backside a quality they value in others, their nickname, their favorite activity, etc. The corners and underside can also be used this way (e.g. top left corner - your favorite summer memory; underside - you at your happiest, etc.)
- Ask participants to go around in circle and share selected parts of their name tents.

Facilitator Tips:

- A variety of colors (for paper and markers) allows participants choice and more creativity.
- These name tents can become borders on bulletin boards in classrooms.

Activity: Numbers

Purpose: a re-focusing activity meant to develop listening and focus skills	Ideal Group Size: 4-50
Skills: Silence, concentration, deep engagement, listening	Space: enough space to hold a circle comfortably
Time: 7-15 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: The group counts consecutively from 1 to 10, without eye contact or knowing who will count next. A great closing or re-focusing activity.

Directions:

- Explain to the group that the object of the activity is to count from 1-10 in order, without overlapping one another.
- The facilitator will start by saying 1 and then anyone can say 2. If two people say 2(or any other number) at the same time then the group goes back to 1 to begin again.
- Once the group counts to 10 without repeating a number, the activity is complete!
- Ask the group their prediction for what number they'll get to without repeating in the first round.

Activity: Opposites Chant

Purpose: to complete a task collaboratively; to listen carefully	Ideal Group Size: 5-100 people
Skills: communication, listening	Space: enough space to form a circle; somewhere others won't be disturbed by volume(this activity can get loud)
Time: 5-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: An energizing listening activity that requires participants to think and respond quickly.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle and explain that they'll have to respond as a group using the opposite of words that you say.
- A list of words you can use: hot, wet, peanut butter, romeo, high.
- Repeat in various sequences building greater rhythm and complexity:

Facilitator: "Low, low, low, low, low, low"

Response: High, High, High, High, High

Facilitator: "High..... High..... Dry:

Response: Low.....Low.....Wet

Facilitator: "Jelly, Jelly Juliet"

Response: Peanut Butter, Peanut Butter, Romeo

Activity: Our Hands Are For OR We Bring & We Leave

Purpose: to discuss responsibility	Ideal Group Size: 5-40
Skills: communication, reflection	Space: any
Time: 7-15 min	Supplies: paper (or hand handout), scissors (optional), pens/markers

Description: A visual and physical activity to discuss responsibility, particularly helpful where students may have challenges with physical touch.

Directions:

- Either prepare ahead of time or with participants two hands drawn on a blank of piece of paper. Trace your hand (or estimate) so that one hand is roughly on each side of the paper.
- Version 1: Our Hands are For - On the left hand, write in the positive things we can do with our hands in school (e.g. write notes, give high fives, help others, raise them to share, etc.). On the right hand, write the negative things we can do with our hands in school (e.g. hit others, flip people off, send text messages during class, lay idle, etc.).
- Version 2: We Bring; We Leave On the left hand, write in the positive feelings//thoughts you bring to the space today (e.g. hope, fun, energy, learning, etc.) On the right hand, write in the negative feelings//thoughts you want to leave outside of this space (e.g. stress, frustration, gossip, etc.).
- Ask participants to cut the hands or rip the paper in half so that they have one “hand” in each hand. Ask them to choose which they want to keep in this space and place that in the center of the circle. The other hand can be physically discarded by balling it up and throwing it in a trashcan or piled up in a stack near the door, symbolizing that these things are left at the door.

Facilitator Tips:

- Consider keeping the positive hands in a place for participants to see throughout the year and/or including them in construction of your social contract.

Activity: Pass a Clap

Purpose: to re-energize, re-focus and have fun	Ideal Group Size: 4-100
Skills: Focus, body language, communication	Space: a space large enough to make a circle
Time: 5-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: A re-focusing activity, with the mission of passing a clap around the circle one clap at a time.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle.
- Explain that there should only be one clap being passed at a time, demonstrate the tempo and eye contact required to connect the clap with someone in the group.
- The goal is to clap at the same time as whoever you're standing next to, this allows you to "pass" the clap.

Facilitator Tips:

- Set a goal with the group! Ask how long it'll take to get the claps around the circle.
- To vary the activity, ask everyone to face in and attempt to clap at the same time. This could be done once goal/s have been accomplished and the group has done the original Pass A Clap several times.

Activity: Pass the Squeeze/Pulse

Purpose: to work together to complete a task	Ideal Group Size: 10-15 people
Skills: cooperation, self-control, interconnectedness	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Fast paced hand squeezing activity that can be used as an opening and closing ritual.

Directions:

- Ask participants to stand or sit in a circle with everyone holding hands. Explain that the object of this activity is to pass a pulse of positive energy around the circle. Passing a squeeze around the circle will transmit this energy, but the positive energy can only be transmitted through the circle if everyone is holding hands (staying together and working as a team).
- Designate one person to start passing the squeeze to their right by gently squeezing the hand of the person standing next to them.
- When someone feels their hand being squeezed, they should pass the squeeze to the next person. This continues until the squeeze makes its way around the entire circle.

Facilitator Tips:

- Variation 1- Participants can be anxious to pass the squeeze around the circle too early, to avoid this, try one of two things: ask everyone to close their eyes or ask everyone in the circle to face outward so they cannot see the squeeze moving around the circle.
- Variation 2- Challenge the group to pass the squeeze as fast as possible.

Activity: People to People

Purpose: to connect with different people	Ideal Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: cooperation, listening, coordination, gross motor skills	Space: large enough space so that participants can interact without being restricted to one area
Time: 8-15 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: A physical connection activity that breaks the ice and challenges participants to engage creatively.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make pairs.
- Explain that the facilitator will call out different ways for the pairs to be joined to each other-finger to finger, shoulder-shoulder, ankle-ankle, head-head, hip-hip, and so on.
- When the facilitator calls out, “people to people”, everyone needs to find a new partner.
- Participants must partner with five different people before they can call a repeat partner.

Facilitator Tips:

- A facilitator may also choose to mix things up by calling out things like finger to shoulder, knee to toe, wrist to head, shoulder to elbow, knee to hand and so on.
- With younger children, it may be helpful to review some of the key vocabulary before playing

Activity: Rainstorm

Purpose: to complete a task collaboratively;	Ideal Group Size: 10-100 people
Skills: cooperation, observation, and coordination	Space: enough space to hold the size of the group
Time: 8-20 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: The entire group uses a series of actions to simulate the sounds of a “rainstorm”.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle. The facilitator “activates” participants by either looking them in the eyes or facing in their direction.
- Once a participant has been activated, they must continue doing the same action until the facilitator instructs them to switch to a new action.
- The activity is done silently so that everyone can hear the rainstorm.
- Go through the following list of actions, slowly but steadily, so that the group can hear the noise build gradually: Steadily rub your hands together. Snap your fingers in an alternating pattern (rather than in rhythm). Slap the palms of your hands against your thighs, also in an alternating pattern. Stomp your feet on the floor (or drum the edge of a desk with your fingers or hands). This is the peak of the storm. The actions start quietly and build to a crescendo before returning to silence.
- To end the activity, lead the participants through the same actions, but in the reverse order.

Facilitator Tips:

- If playing this activity with a large group, have two facilitators: one to demonstrate the action and the other to “conduct” by pointing to different parts of the group.
- This activity works well as a closing ritual. Although it’s loud in the middle, it moves fast and ends in silence. If noise is an issue, consider another more quiet closing activity.

Activity: Silent Line Up

Purpose: to complete a task collaboratively using non-verbal communication	Ideal Group Size: 10-25 people
Skills: communication, problem solving, cooperation, leadership	Space: a large space with room to move around and make a straight line
Time: 8-15 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Participants line up silently, in a particular order.

Directions:

- Ask participants to arrange themselves in a line without speaking.
- For the first round, challenge participants to line up in order of their birth dates (month and day). One end of the line should be marked January 1st and the other end December 31st.

Facilitator Tips:

- This activity is useful for transitions, either before or after other activities.
- Vary the activity by choosing a different order (height, age etc.)

Activity: Silent Switch

Purpose: to connect with another person; to complete a task collaboratively	Ideal Group Size: 10-25 people
Skills: cooperation, non-verbal communication, patience, quick thinking, leadership	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: masking tape

Description: An activity to cultivate non-verbal communication.

Directions:

- Ask participants to stand in a circle, with one person in the middle.
- Hand out small pieces of masking tape or post-it and ask each person to place it in front of their right foot to mark their place.
- Explain that when the activity begins there will be one person in the middle, whose object is to find a place in the circle (as marked by the tape). Anyone in the circle may switch places with any other one person in the circle at any time. All they need to do is get consent from the other person to switch with them. However, nobody may talk.
- Important things to remember: more than one pair may switch places at the same time, people must walk around each other not through each other, people must switch with the person they agreed to switch with-they may not change their minds in mid switch just to take an open space that is closest to them.

Activity: Shark Attack

Purpose: to work as a team to solve a problem	Ideal Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: cooperation, trust, inclusion, sharing, quick thinking, problem solving	Space: large amount of space so that participants have room to move around
Time: 7-15 minutes	Supplies: enough pieces of cardboard or paper for each player, tape (for ocean boundaries).

Description: A fast paced team building activity that encourages communication to save one another from “shark attacks”.

Directions:

- Give each participant a piece of paper, ask them to spread out in the space and place their piece of paper on the ground by their feet.
- These pieces of paper are “boats” and they are standing in the “ocean”. Once the boats are placed, they are anchored and cannot move. Any boat that is ripped will sink and cannot be used as a safe haven.
- When the ocean is safe, the facilitator will call out “free swim”. The ocean is unsafe when the facilitator calls out “shark attack”.
- Participants will have ten seconds to walk briskly to get in a boat. A participant is safe, provided that no parts of their feet are touching the ground. Participants must remain this way until “free swim” is called again.
- During free swim, everyone must swim and cannot remain on a boat. While participants are swimming, the facilitator will remove one or two boats. As more and more boats disappear, participants must work together to keep everyone safe during a “shark attack”.

Facilitator Tips:

- Use tape to define the boundaries of the “ocean” before the activity begins.

Activity: Social Emotional Word Wall

Purpose: to build social-emotional vocabulary	Ideal Group Size: any
Skills: vocabulary-development	Space: bulletin board, white board, chart paper, pocket chart and/or wall space
Time: 15 min to set up; various ways to incorporate it	Supplies: index cards (optional), markers

Description: A semi-permanent, visual, interactive structure in a room to develop social-emotional vocabulary.

Directions:

- Using index cards on a bulletin board, pocket chart or wall space write social-emotional vocabulary words you will model and want students to use during the year/unit/month/week.
- Students can contribute to the wall by adding words or manipulating them with activities.
- Consider the intentional ways you will incorporate these words into your lessons, routines, circles, and assessments.

Facilitator Tips:

- You might consider distributing the NVC feelings and needs handouts for students to keep in their binder or interactive notebooks.

Activity: Today I Bring

Purpose: to learn each other's names	Ideal Group Size: 6 and up
Skills: listening, memorization, team building	Space: a space large enough to create a circle
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: Listening activity, similar to Pass a Clap and the HA HA activity. Participants listen to what names have been said before them and repeat them in sequential order from most recent name to the first name in the beginning of the activity.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle. The prompt begins with, "Today at the party I bring myself (say own name) and"
- The person to the left of the facilitator then begins with the same prompt, adding his/her name and the name of the previous person.
- The chain continues with each person adding their name to the prompt as well as the names of all people who came before.

Facilitator Tips:

- Vary the activity by replacing names with food. The prompt begins with, "Today at the party I bring (insert name of dish). When in opening circle, ask people to share their favorite food at a party as a warm up question.

Activity: The Toilet Paper Activity

Purpose: to work together to complete a task	Ideal Group Size: 10 or more people
Skills: cooperation, non-verbal communication, problem solving, encouragement	Space: enough space to form lines of 5-20 people; or one large circle
Time: 7-15 minutes	Supplies: 2-3 rolls of toilet paper

Description: A delicate problem solving game that encourages teamwork and communication.

Directions:

- Ask participants to stand in a straight line.
- Explain that the person at the front of the line will take the roll of toilet paper, holding onto a piece, and pass it to the end of the group.
- Each person in the line must hold onto the roll and pass it on, over their heads and without breaking it, until it reaches the end. The last person in the line must pass it back to the front, this time going through everyone's legs.
- If at any point the toilet paper rips into two or more pieces, the group must begin the entire process again.
- Make sure the group understands the rules, then hand the roll to the first person in line. Encourage the group to support each other as they play.

Facilitator Tips:

- With a large group, ask people to stand in a circle instead of a line.
- As groups get better, introduce new challenges: alternate between passing the roll over the head of one person, then under the legs of the next; close their eyes; stand in two lines(or circles) and compete against one another.

Activity: Toxic Swamp Crossing

Purpose: to work in a team to complete a task; to strengthen a group's cohesiveness	Ideal Group Size: 7-10 people
Skills: decision making, trust, leadership, communication, non-verbal communication, critical thinking, self-control, cooperation, problem solving	Space: large open space
Time: 15 – 20 minutes	Supplies: masking tape and at least ten "swamp boards"(paper or cardboard)

Description: A team building activity that requires strategy and patience.

Directions:

- Before beginning, make sure that the "Toxic Swamp" boundaries are clearly marked. If the room is small, the swamp should cross the length of the room. If it is a large space, the "Toxic Swamp" should cover about half the length of a basketball court. If the group is large, consider breaking them into small groups of 7-10 people. Once all the participants are assigned to a group, position the teams at one end of the swamp and explain that the primary objective of the activity is to cross the "Toxic Swamp" as a team.
- Each team will be given a number of "Toxic Swamp Boards." Each team should receive enough boards for each player, minus one. For example, if there are eight people on a team, then they should receive seven boards. These are the only boards a team will get. If they lose any during the activity they will not be replaced.
- The "Toxic Swamp Boards are important: They keep participants safe from the swamp only if they are being touched (hand, foot, toe, finger) by a player. If no one is touching the board, the board will dissolve into the swamp (i.e., repossessed by the facilitator).
- If a player steps outside of the "Toxic Swamp" (outside of the lines) then the entire team must go back to the beginning and start over.
- The entire team must traverse the entire swamp together. No one may be left behind or unable to cross the swamp. If someone is left behind or stranded, the entire team must go back to the beginning and start over.
- Distribute swamp boards and give groups five minutes to talk together and develop a strategy.

Facilitator Tips:

- Swamp boards can be pieces of copy paper, but poster board is durable and will last longer.
- Depending on the maturity of the group, the group can complete the task without talking as an added challenge.
- If this activity fails, take enough time to talk to talk about the challenges and issues that arose. Give participants time to talk through any struggles, especially if there was a conflict during the activity.

Activity: Tug of Peace

Purpose: to use teamwork to accomplish a group task	Ideal Group Size: 10-30 people
Skills: cooperation, trust, inclusion, problem solving	Space: large enough space to hold a close knit circle(preferably a soft floor)
Time: 10-20 minutes	Supplies: a piece of strong rope(large enough to support the weight of the entire group)

Description: Like Tug of War, this activity uses a rope. However, in this activity the group works together and uses the rope to complete a task.

Directions:

- Tie two ends of a rope together to create a circle.
- Ask participants to sit around the rope and take hold of it, making sure that they are holding it tightly with both hands and that the rope is taut.
- Explain that the goal of this activity is for the group to stand up together, touching only the rope. No one may touch the floor or another player to balance themselves, only the rope.
- In order to do this, everyone must hold on and pull themselves simultaneously, which means that they need to be thinking about everyone in the group.
- When participants are ready, tell them to begin. If they struggle, stop the activity and talk about what is happening and why it is not working before trying again.
- After the group has stood successfully, congratulate them and then challenge them to sit back down again using the same method.

Facilitator Tips:

- Challenge the group to sit inside the rope and face outward, attempt to complete the task silently, or try an imbalanced circle in which more people are sitting on one side.

Activity: Values Sharing

Purpose: to share values, to create a safe/brave space	Ideal Group Size: 5-50
Skills: empathy, understanding, observation, listening	Space: circle
Time: 5-20 min	Supplies: paper plates or paper, markers

Description: A visual activity to express and describe values for working together

Directions:

- Ask participants to think of 1 value that is important for working together (e.g. respect, honesty, fairness, love, open-mindedness, trust, appreciation, humor, appreciation, etc.).
- Ask participants to write their value in the middle of the plate/paper and share their value and why they chose it in circle as you pass the talking piece.
- The values can then be added to the circle centerpiece and/or to the walls of the room to demonstrate a visual commitment to those values in this space

Facilitator Tips:

- If you have a word wall or the NVC Needs Inventory, these may be helpful resources for vocabulary development.

Activity: Veggie Stew

Purpose: to learn names: to lower the affective filter	Ideal Group Size: 10-25 people
Skills: concentration, gross motor movement, listening, memorization	Space: enough space to form a close (but not claustrophobic) circle
Time: 8-15 minutes	Supplies: name tags (optional)

Description: A “hot potato” name activity.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle. One person stands in the middle of the circle, while another begins the activity. That person should say their name first, and then say the name of someone else in the circle. For example, Tanya begins by saying, “Tanya to Cheryl.” Cheryl would then choose someone else in the circle and say, “Cheryl to Jake,” then “Jake to Laura,” and so on.
- While this is happening, the person in the middle has the job of tagging someone lightly on the shoulder before the second person’s name is said. If the “tagger” tags someone before they can say the second name, the person tagged comes into the middle of the circle, and the now ex-tagger takes their place in the circle.
- The ex-tagger continues by saying their own name and then another person’s name in the circle. If participants run backwards from the tagger to avoid being tagged, create a boundary for the circle, so that if someone crosses it trying to avoid a tag, they are automatically “it.”

Facilitator Tips:

- To vary the activity, if everyone knows everyone else’s name, each person in the group could be assigned a number or be identified by their favorite animal, or characters from television or the movies.

Activity: Wall of Love

Purpose: to appreciate and affirm each other	Ideal Group Size: 5-40
Skills: affirmation, observation, appreciation	Space: wall space
Time: 15 min to set up; various ways to incorporate it	Supplies: construction paper or butcher paper, markers

Description: A semi-permanent visual, interactive structure to display appreciations and affirmations

Directions:

- Determine if you'll do this by group (e.g. table groups, teams, departments) or individual. For the unit you decide, create (or have participants create) a designated space (e.g. one piece of construction paper or one portion of butcher paper) with their name.
- Throughout the day/week/month/year, encourage other participants to observe positive things about the individual/groups and write notes of appreciation and affirmations on their designated wall space.

Facilitator Tips:

- Model how and when you want participants to add affirmations.
- If you see some individuals/groups have fewer notes than others, consider adding to their wall.

Activity: Web of Connections

Purpose: to build relationships	Ideal Group Size: 5-40
Skills: observation	Space: a wall or floor space
Time: 10-15 mins	Supplies: butcher paper or chart paper, markers

Description: A visual representation of the connections between people in the room.

Directions:

- Using butcher paper for large groups or chart paper for small groups, ask each participant to write his/her name and 4-10 things they like or descriptors about themselves (e.g. big sister, reader, hiking, mathematician, biracial, bilingual, soccer player, hip-hop music, etc.).
- Ask participants to take a step back and notice other people who have similar interests or descriptors. Then, ask each person to take a marker and physically draw connections between their descriptors and others'.
- The end result should look like a massive web of connections.

Facilitator Tips:

- Consider giving parameters to the “things” or descriptors they write about themselves (e.g. number of items, personal, professional, etc.).
- Consider giving a recommended number of connections each person should make with others.

Activity: Zoom, Zoom, Skirt

Purpose: to acquaint a group with one another; open the lines of communication; focus on listening	Ideal Group Size: 5-20
Skills: team building, listening, communication	Space: a space large enough to hold a circle
Time: 5-7 minutes	Supplies: talking piece(optional)

Description: The word “Zoom” is passed around in a circle. Participants can say “Skirt” , imitating the sound of brakes, this sends the direction of the circle back to the last person who said “Zoom”. The activity continues by shifting direction. Talking piece can be used in this activity.

Directions:

- Instruct participants to repeat the sounds “Zoom” and “Skirt”. “Skirt” is the sound of brakes being put on “Zoom”.
- “Zoom” continues the pace of the circle, while saying “Skirt” reverses it to the last person who said, “Zoom”.

Activity: Zip, Zap, Zop

Purpose: a tempo building activity to develop eye contact, communication and listening skills	Ideal Group Size: 4-20
Skills: Eye contact and focus	Space: a space large enough to hold a circle comfortably
Time: 7-10 minutes	Supplies: none

Description: An individual sends out a clap of energy out to any person they select in the circle. The rhythm and rotation of the activity goes in the following order: Zip, Zap, Zop. A participant will start with Zip and send it to someone, that someone will send out a Zap to another person, the receiver of Zap will send out Zop to someone else in the circle. Rhythm can be done slow and build up to fast.

Directions:

- Ask participants to make a circle, ask everyone to say Zip, Zap, Zop aloud.
- The first participant in the circle shoots out energy with their hands and says those words in order to pass the energy to someone else.
- The words must be said consecutively (one per person) in order to pass them along.

Facilitator Tips:

- Challenge Round- Once there have been a few rounds, elimination rounds can be played. If someone says their word out of order or doesn't respond, they can step out of the circle.

Restorative Communities

Circle Agreements

Respect the **Talking Piece**

Speak from your **Heart**

Listen with your **Heart**

Speak with **Respect**

Listen with **Respect**

Say Just Enough

Honor Privacy

Bring **Our Best** Selves