



# Team Activities

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# INTRODUCTION

The activities can serve a number of purposes:

- Breaking the ice
- Name Games
- Energisers
- Warm Ups
- Breaking Into Groups
- Shaking Off (the immediate previous experience)
- Claiming involvement from the whole group
- Metaphors
- Trust Games

The leader always needs to keep in mind the purpose or function of the activity when deciding which one to use. Activities may fulfil two or more purposes. They should be adapted and personalised to the leader's style and to suit the situation. They are usually simple, demand little or no factual learning and give good opportunity for developing talk and spontaneity.

Some participants may find them silly, alienating and purposeless, especially when overused. This may be in part because they are threatened or insecure in the new activity but partly also because the leader has not been able to move from the exercise directly into the main matter of his/her theme or materials - the ice may well be broken but the leader has missed all opportunities to take the plunge. The group needs to understand the meaning of the activity for it to be effective.

A further danger is that although some groups may at first need quite a time spent on such acclimatisation activities, they need increasingly to be weaned off onto more substantial fare otherwise the work becomes spineless. The session may be all preparation and promise and no fulfilment - time has run out. Five minutes, involving one or two of such exercises will soon prove sufficient for many groups.

# ICEBREAKERS

## BEAN BLITZ

This is a good way to get people involved with each other at the beginning of a meeting or social event. Each one is given an envelope containing twenty beans. The participants then place some beans in their hand and circulate, offering to someone else the opportunity to guess the number of beans held in their closed hand. They approach another person and say "odd or even". If the person guesses correctly, he or she gets the beans. If they guess wrongly, the same number of beans as held in the hand must be given up. A time limit is set, and whoever has the most beans at the end wins a prize. When your beans are all gone, you are out.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY RACE

Divide the groups into teams. On a signal, each team must line up according to their date of birth, with the youngest person at one end of the line and the oldest at the other. Any team out of order after the time limit (or the last team to get in correct order) loses.

Variation: Do not allow members to talk.

## DO I KNOW THAT PERSON?

Divide into four groups. Have each group select one person and list six to eight facts about him or her. Have another group member read those facts to the other three groups. The task of those three groups is to guess whom the facts describe.

## DR. TANGLE

Have a group of any number of people hold hands. Have one person leave the room. Start in a circle. Then without breaking hands, go under and over other people's arms. When the group is all knotted up, call the person back into the room and have him or her try to untangle the group without breaking hands.

## **PASS THE SQUEEZE**

Group of people sit in a circle, holding hands. One person is in the centre. One member of the group begins by squeezing the hand of the person next to him/her. The person receiving the squeeze passes the squeeze onto the next person and so on - the squeeze being passed round the circle. The person in the centre has to guess where the squeeze is, and having done so, changes places with the person whose hand had just been squeezed. (Squeezes may travel clock-wise or anti-clock wise round the circle.)

## **FIND SOMEONE**

Reproduce the following: Give a copy to each participant and ask them to circulate around the group, putting others' names to each category.

1. Plays a musical instrument
2. Had a special day recently
3. Is married
4. Was abroad recently
5. Has a boyfriend
6. Has a fringe
7. Works in a school
8. Went to the cinema recently
9. Has the birth sign Aquarius
10. Is a County Officer
11. Can whistle
12. Works on a farm
13. Who has been on a Club Officers Training Weekend before
14. Works in an office
15. Who drives a Japanese car
16. Who has been to church in the past year
17. Had a haircut within the last month
18. Has travelled more than 50 miles today
19. Is not a native of (your county)
20. Who did not shave this morning

## **KNEE TO KNEE**

Have the room set up with chairs lined up in two circles facing each other. There should be an equal number of chairs in each circle and every member should have a chair. (If there is an odd number, you can participate). Divide the group into two separate groups and have them

sit down in the chairs. It doesn't matter in what order they sit. Have each side slide their chairs together so that the members on each side are touching knees. Participants are given X minutes to find out as much as possible about their 'Partner'. When time is up people in outside group move one place to left and start again.

## **SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF**

Materials: A roll of toilet paper, one to two bags of M&M's (depending on group size), or another type of small treat which people generally take a hand-full to eat.

If you use toilet paper, inform the group that they need to take as much as they think they would need. Everyone must take some. Be creative in your explanation why they need to take toilet paper.

If you use M&M's or other types of candy, tell the participants that you bought them candy and please help themselves to as much as they want. Mention that the bag will only be passed around once to avoid distractions during the meeting. Ask that no one begin eating until you have the bag again.

Once everyone has toilet paper or candy, inform the group that for every square of piece of candy, they must tell the group something about themselves. To be fair everyone must share at least three things.

Variation/Add-on: You can come up with a general subject that all information must relate to, such as childhood, college life, family, etc. If some people know the game and do not take many squares or candies, then ask who has the most squares/candies. Add between three and ten to this number and then have everyone subtract the number of squares/candies from this number and that is the number of items the individual must tell the group. If using M&M's assign a different number value (both positive and negative) to each colour and have everyone total up the number of items needed to share.

## **DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH**

The group should be divided up into pairs. One partner becomes a serious character and decides he/she will never laugh or even smile again. The other partner has to change this state of affairs. The group will have to decide whether tickling etc. is allowed. Partners exchange roles when the other partner laughs.

## **MACHINES**

One member of the group moves into a space and begins a machine like movement. Each other member of the group joins the activity and "develops" the machine. This can be done by linking, in some way, to the action of any of the people already in the machine. Music can be particularly useful in this activity or each person could make a different sound for his or her action.

## **ALL THOSE WHO.....**

Everyone sits in a circle (surprise, surprise!), with one person sitting in the centre. The person in the centre calls out "All those with say black shoes move". Those with black shoes must swap places. The person in the centre must try to get a chair in the circle. The person in the centre can use a variety of statements from what people wear to the colour of their eyes and so on.

## **"DO YOU LOVE ME HONEY"?**

This game is designed to bring everyone down to the same level so that no one person feels silly playing the games. Everyone sits in a circle and one person stands in the centre. The object of the game is for the person in the middle to make another member of the group laugh. The person selects their 'victim', sits on their knee, looks into that person's eyes and asks 'Do you love me, Honey'. The "victim" then has to reply "I love you honey but I just can't smile" 3 times without laughing or smiling. This game should be played in a non-sexist way i.e. boys should be encouraged to victimise other boys and girls should be encouraged to victimise other girls - the game doesn't have to be played on a male, female basis. People should also be encouraged to play with people they don't already know and not just their friends.

## **WHO AM I?**

This game is played by sticking a piece of paper on the back of each participant. No one may look at what is written on his/her back. On each sheet of paper is the name of a famous person. This can be a real life person, a character from a film, soap opera, cartoon etc. Participants move around the room asking questions in order to find out their own identity. Other people may only reply by answering YES or NO to questions.

## **SIMON SAYS**

Group members stand around the room. The leader gives commands to do all sorts of things - e.g. kneel down, stand on one foot, dance etc. If the command is prefaced by 'Simon Says', it should be done. If it is not, it should not be obeyed. If anyone makes a mistake, they are asked to sit down. The last one left is the winner.

## **PASS THE BALLOON**

The group splits into teams of between 5 and 10 people. Each team stands in line behind their leader. Each leader is given a balloon. On the word 'go' each leader passes the balloon through his/her legs to the next person. This person in turn passes the balloon behind in the same manner. In this way, the balloon is passed right down the line. When the last person gets the balloon, he/she runs to the top of the line and continues to pass the balloon back in the same way. The winning team is the first one to have the leader at the front of the line again.

## **MAGIC BOX**

Place an imaginary MAGIC BOX in the centre of the group. Each member, in turn, goes to the box and 'takes out' something and at the same time mimes an activity connected with the imaginary object they have taken out. For example one member could take out a racket and mime a tennis game. The first person to guess correctly what has been mimed then goes to the centre of the group and takes something out of the box. If someone guesses correctly, but has already had a turn, they should nominate someone who has not yet had a go.

## **THE WINKING GAME**

For this game, you require an uneven number of participants. Half the group sits in a circle on chairs, leaving one seat vacant. The rest of the group stands behind each one of the chairs including the vacant one. The aim of the game is for the person behind the vacant chair to get somebody to sit in their chair. The only way to do this is by winking at somebody sitting in the circle. The person who is winked at must then move to the vacant chair. The only way they can be stopped is by the person behind them grabbing them by the shoulders before they leave the chair. As soon as somebody loses the person sitting in front of them, they must attempt to steal a person from somebody else, and so on.

## **IN MY GRANNY'S TRUNK**

This is a memory game suitable to most groups. The idea is that the group builds up a big list that has to be memorised, added to and repeated by each member. Members can be ruled out when they can't remember every item until a winner is found.

The group sits in a circle. One person begins by saying "In my granny's trunk, I found e.g. an old photo". The sequence then continues clockwise with the next person repeating what has been said beforehand and adding the next item to the list. For example, "In my granny's trunk I found an old photo and a kettle". As the rounds continue, people are eliminated. The items that are found can be as ridiculous as each player wishes.

## **THE OLD FAMILY COACH**

Group members sit around in a circle with the leader in the middle. The leader goes around the group giving each person the name of a character in a story he/she will tell. Characters could be father, mother, Nicola (the daughter), Kevin (the son), Rover the dog etc. In a large group of players, there will be several more fathers, mothers etc. The leader then tells a story about the 'Old Family Coach'. Every time 'father' is mentioned, the group of people who play this character must get up, turn around once and sit down again. All the other players do the same when their characters are mentioned. Every time the 'Old Family Coach' is mentioned, everyone stands up, turns around once and sits down again.

## **OCEAN WAVE**

Group members sit in a circle on chairs. One person stands in the middle. The person in the middle calls 'move left' or 'move right'. All members move one to the left or right, as instructed. The person in the centre continues to call these instructions very quickly. While people are moving, the centre player tries to get a chair and, if successful, is replaced in the centre by the person who is left without a chair.

## **STORY TELLING**

Everyone sits in a circle. The leader starts a story with something that he or she knows will catch the group's interest, stopping at some dramatic

moment. The next person to the left or right takes over the story until everyone has had a turn.

### **WHO IS THE LEADER?**

Group members sit or stand in a circle. One person (A) leaves. A leader is chosen to start actions such as clapping, waving, walking etc. (A) returns to the group. The group must watch carefully and change the action as soon as the leader does, but without appearing to watch him/her. (A) has to guess who the leader is.

### **KNOTS**

This game is a good exercise in group communication and co-operation. Form groups of eight (the ideal size for this exercise). Each group stands in a circle, facing the centre. Everyone crosses and extends their arms and grasps the hands of the two other people opposite them. Nobody should be holding both hands of the same person. Without letting go of hands, the group must try to disentangle itself, resulting in a circle with uncrossed arms but still holding hands. For variation, ask a volunteer (or two) to leave the group. The group joins hands and weaves itself into a knot without breaking connections. The volunteer(s) return and try to untangle the knots without disconnecting any hands.

### **BIRTHDAY LINE-UP**

The leader gives only three instructions: "Without talking, line yourselves up according to the month of your birth" (you could also include the day and date). The members themselves must work out the beginning, end and order of the line, by mime or any other non-verbal communication.

### **HA HA HA**

Everyone lies down, with his or her head lying on someone else's stomach. The first person exclaims 'Ha', to the next person, whose head is on the first stomach, passes the 'Ha!' on, and so on down the line. Then the first person goes 'Ha! Ha!', and so on, building up the number of 'Ha's. They can be loud or soft, pitched high or low, everyone must try to pass them on, see what happens!

## YURT CIRCLE

The name of this game derives from the ingenious Mongolian nomads' tent in which the roof pushes against the walls in perfect equilibrium, keeping the structure standing. If everyone works together, we can get our own yurt supporting itself in no time.

Form a circle with an even number of players. Everyone faces the centre, standing almost shoulder to shoulder and holding hands. Starting anywhere in the circle, get someone to say "In" and ask the person to their left to say "Out". Continue around the circle with "In" and "Out" until everyone has spoken. When finished, each "In" should be standing between two "Outs" and vice versa.

On the count of three, ask the "Ins" to lean toward the centre of the circle and the "Outs" to lean back. Everyone should keep their feet stationary and support themselves with their held hands. With a bit of practice, it is amazing how far forwards and backwards everyone can lean without falling.

Once the yurt is stable, try counting to three and having the "Ins" and "Outs" switch roles while continuing to hold hands. If you get really proficient, you can try switching back and forth in rhythm.

A yurt stays upright because each part is responsible for supporting the whole, with the interplay of forces in opposition and in harmony at the same time.

# NAME GAMES

## CATCHING THAT NAME

Everyone in a circle. A ball is needed. After a preliminary round of introductions, a ball is introduced into the circle. The catcher has to speak the name of the thrower, if they fail they must throw the ball back to the thrower, who continues to throw the ball to different people until they get his/her name right. A catcher who gets the thrower's name right throws to someone else, and so on.

Variation: Thrower says name of person they're throwing ball at.

## INTRODUCING EACH OTHER IN PAIRS

Each person talks for 10 minutes with someone he/she has not met before and then each pair introduce each other to the group. Points for discussion - what do people consider to be the important aspects of someone when introducing them to the group?

Variation: Individually write down the 5 most important questions that someone should ask you so they can get to know the real you. Exchange the list of questions so that each person is asked their own questions and then do as above. OR: pairs can share their expectations and/or misgivings about the coming activities with each other and then with the group.

## REMEMBERING NAMES

Everyone stands or sits in a circle. One person gives his/her name (perhaps with some movement or gesture). The next person in the circle then gives his/her own name (plus gesture or movement) and the name (and gesture or movement) of the person before. The third person then gives his/her own name (plus gesture or movement) and the names (and gestures or movements of the previous two) and so on around the circle.

WARNING: Some people find it initially intimidating to have to express themselves non-verbally.

## **ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

This is another name game. The people in the group have to say their name once - the rest of the game is played in silence. When every name has been said only once, the group has then to arrange itself by remembering other people's names into alphabetical order.

**WARNING:** Leaders should be aware of participants with literacy problems when playing this game.

## **THE SEAT ON MY RIGHT IS FREE**

All players sit in a circle. One seat remains empty. The player to the left of the empty seat begins: "The seat on my right is free, I want (Jim) next to me". (Jim) then sits in the empty seat and says "The seat on my right is free, I want (Sue) next to me". The game should be played at a brisk pace. To maintain the pace, a shorter version of simply calling the person's name may be better. After a while, two free seats may be created.

**WARNING:** Some people may be left out so it might be useful for the leader to suggest names.

# ENERGISERS

## SKINNING THE SNAKE

Each team playing stands in a line one behind the other, each player with their left hand back between their leg and right hand forward to hold left hand of the player in front. On the word GO, the back player crawls through the legs of the player in front NOT LETTING GO HANDS. The next player follows him down the 'tunnel', until everyone is through and standing up again. No one should break hands at anytime.

This can either be a race between teams or merely a demonstration of agility.

## LAP SIT

"Please sit on my knee!" Move into a tight circle and when the above phrase is shouted everyone sits down on the knees behind him or her.

N.B. if someone shouts 'Up' the group must get back up.

## MUSICAL CHAIRS

Have a circle of seated players with one spare seat. One person stands inside circle and tries to sit on the spare seat. Seated players move around from chair to chair in clockwise direction. If the person in the middle manages to get a seat, the person on their right must stand up.

## STAND UP

Sit on the ground back to back with your partner, knees bent and elbows linked. Now simply stand up together, without using your hands.

## PASS THE ORANGE

Put participants into two teams. Give an orange to the first person in each team and ask them place the orange under their chin. On the instruction "Go", they have to pass it to the next person under their chin, without using their hands.

## **PASSION FRUIT**

Players sit in a circle with one player standing in middle holding a folded newspaper. All the players pick the name of a different fruit (there may be duplicates, depending on group size). One of the seated player calls out the name of their fruit and the player in middle must tip this "fruit" with the newspaper before someone else can call the name of their fruit. (You might like to suggest players use a tactical approach to this game).

## **SWORDS**

Two people stand in the middle of the circle. Index fingers are swords and each partner has to stab the other in the back three times. The people forming the circle judge, and call "Touch" when they see a hit. The loser tags the next opponent.

## **PLEASE SIT DOWN**

Group sits on the floor in a circle. One person walks around and places their hands on the shoulders of two people who are sitting side by side. They then stand up and very politely ask the person standing to "Please sit down". They must then greet each other, shake hands and then run in opposite directions around the circle. When they meet again, they must greet each other again politely and run to the vacant place. The one to arrive first sits down and the other starts the whole process again. If they don't greet each other properly, they are out of the game.

## **MILL & GRAB**

The entire group "mills around". The leader/facilitator calls out a number e.g. 5. Participants have to run to make circles of 5, holding hands up together. Then the leader calls out another number which the group has to form into, and so on.

## **ALL THOSE WHO:**

Players sit in a circle of chairs with one person standing in the middle with no chair. The person in the middle then calls out "All those who \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. wearing ear-rings) change places". All players to whom this description applies must get up and change places with someone else, while the person in the middle tries to take a seat, leaving someone else

left in the middle. This new person then says "All those who \_\_\_\_\_"(it must be different from any previous one), whereby the rest change places and so on.

## **GENERAL POST**

Chairs in a circle, with one person who has no chair. That person goes round the group giving everyone, including her/himself a number from 1 upwards. He/she then calls 2 numbers, the owners of which have to exchange seats, whilst the person in the middle tries to get to one of the seats first. Whoever is left without a seat starts again by calling two numbers etc. If the person in the middle is finding it hard to get a seat, he/she may call "General Post", at which everybody has to run to a different seat until again one person is left standing.

## **COPYCAT**

All the players form a circle either sitting or standing, and one is selected to start things off. He or she then performs a particular action such as nodding, grimacing, bouncing up and down or anything else that comes to mind. The second player must repeat the action exactly but adding an action of their own at the same time. The third player must copy both, add a third, and so on. When a player fails to perform the accumulated activities correctly, he or she drops out of the game. The winner is the last one to execute the by then almost impossible frenzy of movements.

## **GROUP YELL**

Group huddle together in crouching position. Leader begins a low hum. As the group begins to rise slowly, the sound level also rises, so that at the end, everyone leaps into the air and shouts at the same time. Repeat until everyone has really shouted at the end.

## **REVEILLE**

In this game, all the players are required to remove their shoes and toss them into a jumbled heap in the centre of the room. When an appropriate signal is given, all present dive headlong into the centre and give the pile a good mixing-up. This done, all retire to the edges of the room and the lights are turned off. Another signal is given and everyone

fumbles back to the middle of the room and attempts to find and put on his or her own shoes.

## **SHARKS**

At least five people are needed for this activity. An area is designated as the Life raft (drawn with chalk, made up of cushions, scraps of materials, paper etc). The groups move around the raft, swimming in the pleasant sea. Leader calls "Sharks" and everyone has to jump on to the Raft. When it is safe again, everyone can get off and carry on with their swimming. Meanwhile the leader makes the raft slightly smaller, although the number of people remains the same. Again, s/he warns 'Sharks' and everyone jumps on the Raft and so on. The Raft steadily gets smaller until it proves impossible for all the people to get on - those that don't make it are eaten up by the sharks.

## **STATIONS**

An activity for any number of people. Form a circle with something to mark each person's place. Everyone has the name of a station. The person in the middle calls out two of the names. These people have to swap places and the person in the middle has to try to gain one of their places. As many names as you want can be called out, so that many people are changing at the same time.

## **SQUARE-WALKING**

Decide upon the performing area. People enter the area one at a time and begin walking in straight lines (vertically or horizontally, not diagonally). Changes of directions must be made by turning sharp right angles. If you meet someone coming towards you on your path, you may have an encounter with them, but when it is over you turn away sharply and continue walking, wiping from your face all traces of the encounter, so that when you are walking your eyes focus directly ahead, and your expression is blank. These are the basic rules: vary size of the space (it may become gradually smaller), the speed which people move at, what happens at the encounters.

# WORD GAMES

For groups of four or more sitting in a circle.

## WORD ASSOCIATIONS

First person starts with a noun, say 'desk', second person quickly says the first association s/he has with that, say 'books', a third adds, say, 'stories' and so on. A variant here is for the player to add a rhythm after the last word and the new word, with clapping - twice on the knees, twice in the air, then two silent beats. So - 'desk' tap-tap, clap-clap, rest-rest 'books' tap-tap, clap-clap, rest-rest 'stories' tap- tap, etc.

## WORD DISASSOCIATIONS

Same pattern with rhythms or not but within reason the word following must have no immediate associations with the last word at all - more difficult than it sounds.

## REVERSIBLES

Players spell their first name backwards. Then try to make up a dictionary definition of the new word.

These activities can help for quickness of thinking and spontaneity but also lead into a look at different associations each of us has with words. Players can say what they would have said to some of the words and how some are associated with significant moments of experience which always stick to them.

## BABBLE

In pairs using only nonsense words, gibberish/gobbledegook (not foreign ones), or using consecutive letters of the alphabet or consecutive numbers, take it in turns, with interruptions and interactions to

- Have a quarrel
- Tell a funny story
- Break bad news
- Propose
- Try to borrow money
- Confess you've done something wrong
- Pass on some scandal

- Demonstrate a new gadget or machine you have just made.

This can be enjoyable and exhausting. Groups then might want to talk about intonation and context, about understanding foreign languages, about non-verbal communication. The gibberish can help some hesitant talkers but it can inhibit others further.

# METAPHORS

These are all activities which make a point

## COMMENTARIES

These can all be single person activities. Players pretend they have a microphone or a telephone and give a running commentary into it like a radio sports commentator.

- **One-sided telephone conversations** - leader can set the theme or give scope for invention (infinite variety here - including crossed lines).
- **Driving a car** - giving commentary of what the driver is doing, with all the sounds of the car's operation, and what he can see out of the window.
- **Work** - commentary of working at a bench, making the noise of all the tools and the mechanical gadget they are making/using.
- **Event** - giving a running commentary as if you were present at some imagined and well-documented event, like the Fire of London, or an air raid in the last war, or disaster abroad.
- **Radio** - as if the participant is a foreign radio correspondent (with a strong accent) giving a running commentary of the teacher or leader who mimes a game of tennis for the class.
- **Modelling** - give a suave, polished commentary of one of the girls of the group walking up and down as if modelling for a fashion house.
- **Washing** - give a commentary while washing a car, an elephant, or a baby, or making pastry.

Some of these the leader might ask to hear solo, but generally they are private events to try to generate a speech flow, some spontaneity and clear strong diction. Many participants enjoy this as their contribution gets lost in the general hubbub, others tend to mutter into their hands and opt out as there is no interaction.

## STARTERS

Participants work in pairs. In turn, each is given a one-line starter and maybe the situation for it. The second person must pick up the situation immediately the first person has spoken. By changing the situation, the starter line can be used in various ways.

- "Is he still breathing?" - On the pavement; at the hospital; in the jungle etc.
- "Sorry, no foreigners"
- "Why don't you get your hair cut?"

- "Has it got two heads or is that three?"
- "They're a menace. It's time they did something about it"
- "Now we're done for. I forgot to bring it with me."
- "Where on earth has my wooden leg gone?"

Each situation need only be followed for a minute or two but it gives a good opportunity to improvise and back-up the other person to make it work. Sometimes amazingly detailed plotting comes out of this.

## **ALIBIS**

Groups of six or more. One person elects to be the detective who stands in the middle of the group. He thinks up a crime and states where and when it was committed. He is now going to cross-question one of the suspects. The whole group acts as that one suspect corporately, remembering anything that anyone of its representatives speaks. The detective turns to a member and begins his cross-examination, and then he quickly switches to another and another, as if they were one person, so continuity is important. The detective aims to catch out the suspect and break his alibi when he disagrees with himself or forgets what he has said. Then that person becomes the detective and the situation starts again: "Where were you on the night of the murder?"

This is as much a testing of the detective as of the suspect to see if he can keep the questioning quick-fire. It demands memory work and invention to keep the situation plausible and not ludicrous. It can easily lead into any law and justice issue.

## **ADVOCATES**

Again groups of six or more. It is another catching-out game. In the middle is a prosecutor who is trying to elicit facts from the accused. However, the accused (this is the person the prosecutor is looking at and talking to at any time) never speaks. His advocate (the person standing to the left of the accused and who of course changes every time the accused changes) always replies. Anyone who makes a mistake becomes the new prosecutor.

Again, this depends on the prosecutors keeping the questioning going speedily. It is fun when done quickly and is a test of reactions and concentration.

## **THE OUTSIDER**

The group forms a tight circle by putting their arms round the waist of the participants on either side of them. One player is excluded from this and is to try to get inside the circle by any means (verbal or physical). The group tries to keep the 'outsider' out. It is useful to discuss afterwards how the 'outsider' felt.

## **MAGIC SHOP**

In pairs, A is the shopkeeper, B wants to buy some personal qualities like 'beauty' or 'wisdom' or 'good health'. He has to exchange them for some other quality of his like wealth or good looks or laughter. The shopkeeper will want to haggle and barter. Perhaps 'wealth' is not enough for 'wisdom' - maybe 'hearing' will have to go too. B must decide if he could tolerate that and make an alternative proposal if not.

Some groups take this in a very happy-go-lucky way and it becomes just a simple shop exercise. Other groups take it much more earnestly and weigh up what qualities they genuinely would be prepared to give up. It can give rise to some very profound discussion if followed through. It can also be usefully revealing on attitudes and values and identify on what to base further work.

## **IN OTHER'S SHOES**

Groups sit in fours, A, B, C and D. Ideally participants should not know each other, so this is ideal for a training course or residential experience with new members. There are no roles to start with - everyone is who s/he is.

A interviews B and C interviews D. They do this in some depth and spend at least 10 minutes over it, asking about background, biography, beliefs, interests etc. The second part is more difficult. A is now going to imagine that he is B and that C is D (even though either could be the opposite sex). Now D is going to interview A and B is going to interview C in their new roles. Everything A and C say must be either what they have been told or what they imagine that B and D would do or say. Not only are the attitudes and information important but all the non-verbal communication too, how they would sit, or use their hands or the facial expressions they would use.

They must do their best really to climb inside the other person using whatever cues and clues they have gleaned. When the leader declares time up, A and C should go back to their original partners to see how close some of their invented replies were to the truth. Now the whole exercise could be reversed with B and D undertaking the initial interviewing.

Variations (a): Play it only in pairs. After A has interviewed B, he becomes B and then B interviews 'himself' (i.e. A). Clearly B can use this not only as a recap to see what A makes of him but also, because he knows all the areas that A did not ask about, to see what assumptions A will make when he asks him. This can be very revealing for B and often gets highly involving here. It can also be hurtful if A is not sensitive, for the B's often probe A's to explore their own self-image and to see how it is communicated. It can lead to some very real expression of feeling afterwards and can be positively very reassuring.

Variation (b): A different approach is for the leader to choose several topics in the area he wants the group to explore and pose these to everyone in pairs with the aim of seeing if there is any genuine point of disagreement. It may be as simple as seeing what different football teams or pop stars the other supports, or more importantly finding attitudes about issues like abortion, racism, sexism, ageism, euthanasia or the National Front etc. The two should explore any point of difference. Then the leader will ask everyone to reverse roles and discuss vehemently for the opposite point of view as convincingly as possible, picking holes in their partner's (i.e. their own) attitude.

These are all more probing exercises where there is less pretence and more genuine empathetic response from a 'real' stimulus. They are usually enjoyable because most people like the undivided attention that any interviewer usually gives and many of us enjoy talking about ourselves. This needs to be well discussed afterwards in the pairs or fours to give an opportunity for the real feelings that will have been involved during the exercise to be explored and new self-perceptions talked out.

## **MIXED DOUBLES**

Groups of four are needed. A and B each have an inner voice who sits to one side behind them and speaks their thoughts, often after one person opposite has spoken. Attitudes expressed can be very different from these thoughts, especially if the two people playing the same role have sympathy and understanding. After each exercise, the speaker and inner thoughts should reverse roles. Situations can be superficial or

fun, e.g. two women meeting to show off new dresses to each other, or one visiting the other to admire new home decorations, or two men boasting to each other in a pub or talking about distant triumphs. Alternatively the situations can aim to probe more sensitively how we interact with others: a teenager trying to express a problem to a parent; a teacher trying to encourage and reassure a pupil; two acquaintances trying to develop a friendship; a disagreement with an angry opponent who has done something foolish and is trying to justify himself. In each case the other voices A and B have to take their interaction slower than usual and wait to listen to their inner voices, having already listened to the outer voice of the other. It is a much more conscious process and needs both concentration and practice but can be rewarding when it moves on from caricatures.

## **VIEWPOINTS**

To prepare for a deeper exploration or more detailed simulation it is often helpful to take five to ten different aspects of the problem and let everybody taste them for 30 seconds to a minute each in a quick range of roles. Then when they take the one role that might be allocated to them, their responses will have been alerted to the wider issues. It does not matter how stereotyped or superficial the responses are initially, it is the cumulative effect and the wakening of interest that is important in the wider social implications.

- A motorway is to be built. How might the following react - two farmers, two shopkeepers, two unemployed navvies, two keen conservationists, two garage mechanics, two councillors, two to-be evicted tenants, two char ladies?
- Civil war is to be declared in 1642. How might the following react - two elderly king's men, two young sons of a parliamentarian, two beggars, two Scotsmen, two scholars, etc?
- King Duncan has just been murdered in Macbeth's castle. How might these react - two of Duncan's servants, two ambitious warrior lords, two of lady Macbeth's maids, two newspaper reporters of the Dunsinane Echo, Hecate and her mother, Macbeth's sons, the porter and his crony, etc?
- Trouble at mill. What happens between the following - boss sacking old workman, employee asking for more money, new employee being shown around, employee being offered promotion, planning initiation ceremony for new apprentices, two workers trying to draw up list of improvements, disagreement with shop steward, etc?

The aim here is quickness of response and a preliminary overview that draws upon unrealised existing vague knowledge before new information is fed in. If some of the situations are comic, this is all to the good to generate a spark of enjoyment before the topic buries everyone in over-earnestness.

## **WE ARE MANY**

This can be played in pairs or in small groups. Rather like the last exercise it aims to move quickly over a range of situations but each might run for slightly longer, perhaps two minutes. The intention is to give evidence of how we behave variously during a day with the range of roles we come in contact with and yet how there is a consistency behind all those contacts. It could be that each group or pair has an observer to write down examples of our adaptability and our consistency. One player in the pair or group must take the central role throughout, e.g.

### **SCHOOL PUPIL**

- With a parent at breakfast time
- With a brother or sister who wants to borrow some of your clothes
- With your form teacher who wants to see you about your work
- With your friend to plan what you will do tonight
- With the head teacher who has called you into his office because of reports about lateness and laziness,
- With the youth leader who wants you to represent the club in an activity you are keen on.

### **MOTHER**

- With your son/daughter at breakfast time
- With a tradesman who overcharges
- With a work mate while doing your part-time job;
- With a rare visitor (husband's boss, vicar, prim aunt,) you are entertaining to tea
- With your husband over the evening meal,
- With your close friend who calls in to see you.

### **FATHER**

- With wife at breakfast time
- With a work mate while working
- With your boss who you are asking for a favour,
- With your best friend who is sharing your hobby,
- With your child's form teacher on parents' day at school,
- With your son/daughter coming home late

This always produces a very rich discussion and evaluation. The leader can ask if it is right to adapt to different company. Should we always be ourselves, come what may? What is 'ourselves'? How do we make people different from ourselves feel at home or comfortable with us? What were the differences both observed and felt within that range of situations? When were you most yourselves and when least? Moreover, why does it matter?

## **ANIMAL CRACKERS**

This activity is best used once there is some trust in the group. A is asked to imagine that B is going to have a film made about his life. However, it is to be a Walt Disney film and B will be personified as an animal, fish or bird through B's own voice. Decide on the animal or whatever and then introduce B in this new guise to other members of the group, accounting for some of his typical animal antics and foibles. Reverse roles and try again. This can be fun and quite revealing. It can also be quite hurtful if done with an unsympathetic group. With some groups, perhaps a stipulation could be that only a complimentary animal should be chosen.

## **CIRCULAR ROLE PLAY**

This needs from six to sixteen participants playing in pairs. Half the group sits on chairs in a circle and their partners stand behind them. The chair is identified with a certain role and whoever sits in that particular chair must take on that role. To help remember which chair has which role, an appropriate hat can mark the chair: cloth hat, cap, bowler hat, policeman's helmet, flowery hat, peaked cap etc. or newspapers folded up into sailor-boat style hat with the role written boldly in felt tip pen across the front.

A situation is then given to a group - if a large number perhaps it is a committee met to plan something - a village garden fete, a county rally, a fund-raising scheme, a finance committee, etc. If it is just three roles then perhaps parent, teenager and grandparent meet to plan a family holiday together, or teacher and parent together help a teenager make decisions about the future. In each case the person standing behind the chair is the 'thought man' and can advise the chair-sitter on what to say by whispering to him and putting points of view. The person on the chair has to put these into actions as his own comments.

The leader can make any one of three changes (perhaps using a whistle or some mode of calling) and the changes must then be made by the

participants speedily and with no obvious interruption to the flow of the situation.

1. One whistle blast or shout of 'change' - all people standing up change places with their partners sitting down, hats changing heads.
2. Two blasts or a shout of 'left' - all those sitting on chairs move round one chair to their left, leaving their hats behind them.
3. Three blasts or a shout of 'special' - two chair-sitters only (which the leader points to) change position, leaving the hats behind. These will often be the main protagonists at that moment but could be a speaker in a lively role exchanging with a role that has not been opened up.

This game is usually good fun, often hilarious, develops a responsive group feeling and is a way of involving the quieter, less forthcoming members. It seems superficial with all the chopping and changing but groups have been known to focus on the topic and gain an understanding of how different players in the same role can make it take on a completely different significance and how the decisions go in a very different direction.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Preparing young people to cope with interviews is a useful exercise, with the need for rehearsal obvious. The skill lies in the interviewer. Ask participants to identify different jobs and to work out the range of skills necessary in order to be able to select a suitable candidate for such work.

- At first the leader sets up the interview situation with the leader interviewing one person and the rest as observers who are asked to look at particular aspects of the relationship. The interviewer needs to prepare well, especially if it is to be a young person in the interviewee role. Sometimes panels of two, three or four interviewers are best, as in real life, with a chairman appointed to work out beforehand how they should question and what they are looking for.

When observers to this role-play are asked to report back, they should be instructed to be constructive and not hurtful. Perhaps after the leader has given some training to the entire group, the interviewee could have an opportunity to try the situation again to see if certain social skills can be improved. In this way, certain speech mannerisms, ways of sitting, lack of eye contact, gestures, what to wear, etc can all be easily improved without undermining self esteem.

- A development of this is to set a number of panels up of 3/4 interviewers looking for an employee. Each panel is from a different firm. There should be the same number of interviewees as panels, say four with a group of twenty and four participants to a panel. After allowing some time for the panels to prepare questions etc, let them in turn interview each of the four applicants and select one for its job. The interviewees then move on in unison in a circular way from panel to panel every fifteen minutes. In the meantime the applicants can decide which of the four 'firms' impressed them most and seemed the best to work for, remembering that an interview is a two-way selection process. If the jobs are very diverse, the hope is that each panel would not choose the same person. In this way, all the group has a full experience and both interviewers and interviewees can gain some greater awareness from the comparisons of the situation.
- A different kind of interviewing at a different level is that of the media man/woman who interviews members of the public for 'man in the street' responses to national issues or for some reason like winning the lottery, success at sport or examination, marriage, catastrophe, burglary, hijacking or sudden fame. These are easier for the players initially if everybody plays him/herself. A interviews B on what he thinks about school, sports, parents, homework etc. and reports back. B could then interview A, who might be in a role like headmaster, parent, policeman etc., about the same topics.
- Authority interviews are easily set up and enable the leader to see how naively the young people often still see authority figures and the pressures on them. Again, there is scope here for some facts being fed in to deepen the empathy: teacher/pupil, parent/child, employer/employee, shopkeeper/buyer, doctor/patient etc.
- Another kind of interviewing is the sudden arrival of an intelligent and English speaking space man from another galaxy who wants to have certain things explained to him that he has discovered since landing. This can be about any aspect of society, jobs, roles, how things work, institutions customs etc. It is an excellent way of probing assumptions and questioning attitudes.

## **MOOD SWINGS**

These are all worked in pairs.

- The A's are privately briefed to take up a certain mood quite strongly, imagining what has sparked it off - cheerful, sad, irritable, angry,

friendly, fed-up. B's are privately briefed to go in neutrally, pick up A's mood and then to echo it, so they also become sad, cheerful etc. This needs to be talked about afterwards and feelings examined.

- B's are now briefed to take up a mood strongly. A's are detailed to go in, discover the mood and take on the opposite mood. This needs to be talked about afterwards and feelings examined.
- A is briefed to have a very poor opinion of him/herself. B is separately briefed to try to improve A's poor opinion by making himself out to be even worse and yet he copes.
- B is now encouraged to think poorly of himself. A is privately detailed to build up B's opinion of himself but not in any way to undermine his own. If this works at all, it is worth examining what is happening here and how we build each other up or knock each other down continually.
- A is privately briefed to think of a strong feeling like fear, courage, loyalty, devotion, hate, tenderness, joy and to imagine a problem with B. A does everything in his power to push the feeling onto B so that he becomes fearful, courageous, loyal or whatever.
- B is now privately briefed to have some kind of minor practical problem (something is broken, has lost something important, ripped something, cut hand etc.) and also briefed to praise, flatter and boost A for his help. A is separately briefed that B has some kind of problem and needs help but that A feels fed up and gives the help reluctantly.

We are all part of the human conspiracy and reinforce our own self-images by the company we keep. These can be useful exercises to explore how we are in part made by other people's needs and how far we are prepared to go along with them before our needs cry "Enough, no more".

## **WAITING ROOM**

This works in groups of four or five. Each player has to imagine a strong role, like a tramp, city gent, char lady, posh woman, hippie, blue-stockings etc. and some reason why that person should be waiting somewhere - such as waiting for the dentist, for a train to arrive, a baby to be born, a dog or cat to be vetted, a car to be cleaned or repaired, to see the headmaster for the result of an interview, for a girl or boyfriend, for a pregnancy test, at the gates of heaven, for a bus, in a food queue during the war, for a planted bomb to go off and so forth. The players must

assume that each person is there for the same reason as they are. The aim is to keep a straight face and make one of the others laugh without giving away too obviously why you are there. Each can ask questions of the others in their mistaken assumptions and react feelingly to the opening news that "It won't be long now - only three minutes to go!" as the starter. This is mainly an entertainment but can be seen as a test of ingenuity to keep up the differing roles and confuse the situation without breaking into laughter. The tension of the waiting helps to make it work.

## **SAYING WHAT I'M GOOD AT**

Use the following checklist to choose five positive qualities or talents that you have.

- I am a good listener
- I am a hard worker
- I am patient
- I can keep secrets
- I am a generous person
- My friends trust me
- I am usually on time
- I am good at sports
- I am good fun
- I am good at work I school
- I am a good singer
- I am humorous
- I am friendly
- Any skill I have
- Anything I have done for myself
- Other

# TRUST EXERCISES

## TRUST FALLS

Each person finds a partner of roughly the same size and weight. A stands 2 or 3 feet away from B and turns his/her back to B. With eyes shut and keeping feet together, A slowly falls back on B. B catches A and lifts A back to a standing position. After a while the partners switch roles. When everyone has swapped places with their partners, then the exercise can be repeated in a group.

Groups of three. The person in the middle has one person facing him/her in front and one person facing him/her behind (both 1-2 feet away). The middle person rocks gently backwards and forwards, with his/her eyes closed. The people in front and behind gently push them back to a vertical position.

A group forms a circle, everyone standing. One person in the middle, eyes closed and body as above. This time they can fall in any direction, and be gently supported and pushed back upright by the group. Each person takes a turn in the middle.

Variation (a): Try 'rolling' the person in the middle around the group by passing them onto the person on their left, rather than pushing them upright each time.

Variation (b): Try getting the person in the middle to lay, face up, on the floor. The rest of the group space themselves evenly around the reposing person, lifts them up, carries them a short distance, and then lays them carefully back on the floor.

## SITTING CIRCLE

This game is suitable for large groups. The group stands in a close circle in queue form, with right shoulders to the centre of the circle. The circle closes so that each person is touching the person in front and behind them. Participants then hold the waist of the person in front. Everyone bends their knees gradually, until they feel supported by the knees of the person behind. The circle should be self-supporting. It may be helpful to lean slightly towards the centre. After this has been achieved (it may take a few attempts!) try doing different things, such as everybody raising their left leg, or everybody extending their arms together etc.

## **MOULDING**

Everybody chooses a partner, one is A, the other is B. A moulds B, moving arms, legs, shoulders etc. When the 'sculptors' (A's) are finished, they walk around the room looking at the other statues. If they want to change something, they can. They then return to their partner and make any further changes they want. Discuss names of the statues etc. Partners then switch, and B moulds A into a statue.

## **FLIGHT**

If the group wishes, this series can lead up to flight. This is quite an effective and dramatic group trust exercise. However, it's one that should be carried out with the utmost care and caution to avoid possible accidents. All but one of the groups stand facing each other in pairs close together, arms outstretched to form the Safety Net. One member of the group stands on a piano / high table / ledge with their arms by their sides. From this position, they fall into the arms of the group.

### **Important information for this exercise**

- There should be at least 10 people set up as the catchers.
- The platform should be no more than 6 feet high.
- The person falling should keep his/her arms held closely to the side of their body and fall with the body rigid i.e. not bending at the waist.
- The catchers should set themselves up as 2 lines and stand shoulder to shoulder facing one another. Hands are extended palms up and with the hands from each side of the line alternated to form a secure landing area.
- Do not allow catchers, facing one another, to grasp hands or wrists in order to provide a firm solid landing - knocked heads will result.

Variation (a): Someone lies underneath the catching arms to see if they can maintain eye to eye contact with the person in flight. After flight, the faller can be passed along the line, with the person at the 'feet end' moving up to the 'head end' of the line after the faller has been passed on.

Variation (b): Have the person falling backwards. Assign one person in the group to stand on the platform with the volunteer about to fall. It is that person's responsibility to make sure the faller is (a) spatially aligned with the catchers and (b) tilting his/her head back as a means of remaining rigid.

Try to achieve 100% participation during this activity, even if it only means standing on the platform and looking down at the line of catchers.

## **CONTROL TOWER**

Divide the group into pairs. The first pair gets up. A (the plane) is blindfolded. B (the control tower) guides A verbally through an obstacle course that has been set up between two rows of chairs (the runway). A penalty point is given every time A touches an obstacle. When A has five points, both A and B crash and are out. The next pair starts. This can be played in teams.

## **TOUCH IT**

The leader announces, "Everyone touch (blue) (or another colour, object etc.)". Participants touch something (blue) on another person, e.g. touch an arm; touch a head; touch a ring. Endless variations are possible e.g. touch a left ear with your right thumb. Some leaders find it interesting to allow younger groups to play this game in slow motion.

## **FACE TOUCH**

This game is most suitable for groups of 15 - 20 or more. Divide the group into A's and B's. In silence, the A's sit down and close their eyes. Each B sits or kneels facing (but within reach of) an A, and places A's hands on B's shoulders. A explores B's face, hair, hands and shoulders. After a while all the B's go and stand in line. A's then open their eyes and go to find their partner in the line. When they find him/her, they explain how they identified him/her, e.g. length of hair, size of hands etc.

## **WILLOW IN THE WIND**

Imagine a warm summer night. Crickets are chirping, and graceful willows are swaying in a gentle, perfumed breeze. Form a small circle of about eight participants standing shoulder to shoulder and facing the centre of the circle with hands held at chest height, palms forward. Each should have one foot slightly behind the other for good balance. The group has just transformed itself into a summer breeze, and now all that is needed is a volunteer to be the willow. The willow stands in the centre of the circle with his/her feet together, arms crossed over their chest and their eyes closed. Keeping their feet stationary and body straight but

relaxed, the willow lets him/herself go, swaying from side to side, forward and back. The circle supports the willow with gentle pushes of their palms and provide summer-breeze sound effects. Make sure that there are at least two people supporting the willow at all times and that the gentle breeze does not become a howling hurricane. In turn, everyone gets to be the willow in the wind, swaying back and forth, caressed by the breeze. This is a trust game. The participant who is the willow gets the opportunity to trust the other participants completely, and the participants who are the breeze get to feel the trust the willow has placed in them.

## **GROUP HUG**

This is a more physical way for the group to affirm each other. The group stands in a row and then holds each other's hands. The person at the end of the row stands still while the rest of the group wind themselves into a tight circle. Everyone then gives a gentle squeeze.

## **LOG ROLL**

And finally, another trust game, which uses physical contact to break down apprehension and shyness. Everyone lies down side by side in a row. The person at the end of the row then has to roll along the top of the rest of the row until they get to the end. The next person then rolls along etc.