

Get to Know You Games and Activities

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Draw a Pig

Everyone gets 1 minute to draw a pig. When they are done, I share this analysis of what it means if their pig is facing a particular direction, if their tail is curly, if their ears are bent, etc, based on some expert's psychoanalysis of pig drawing.... And it always evolves into a great discussion about judgements, and how inaccurate they can be...what things we often get judged on because of our appearance, manners, voice, etc, and what we know we may get wrong about others (this last part is a trust leap into being vulnerable).

If God were a.....

Ask for a list of nouns from the group. Write the suggestions down. Pick one, and tell the group they have 30 seconds to make a sketch of "If God were a...." whatever that noun is. The great thing is there isn't time to make good sketches, and the fun thing about "if God were a chair" or "if God were a banana", etc, are pretty great.

Silent Partners

Pair up and without using sounds or words, tell the other about yourself for 3 minutes. Have the "listener" say back what they think they understood, and correct misunderstandings. Then switch places. Then have the pairs introduce the other to the whole group. Talk about "ways of listening".

Teacher

Pair up and have one person give a 3 minute lesson to the other on some topic. It can be anything they feel they are a bit of an expert on: how to cast a fly rod..... how to play a video game..... how to do a tai chi move. Then swap places. Return to the group and make a list of everything everyone "taught." Keep the list up as a way of reminding people of things they can talk to others about.

Back to Back Art

This only works if people are comfortable having someone touch them on their back. Check this out first. Sit in 2 lines, one behind the next. The 2 farthest back are shown a sketch of something, and then they have to draw that on the back of the person in front of them. That person then draws what they "got" on the person's back in front of them..... The person at the very front of the line then draws this on a piece of paper. Do it a few times with different people at the front, and encourage the teams to figure out how to be more accurate in "knowing" the image, etc.

Two Truths and a Lie

One person tells 3 things about themselves: 2 are truthful and 1 is a lie. The rest of the group talks between themselves trying to figure out which is the lie.

Who's Got the Ball?

One person is in the middle of the circle. They close their eyes and count to 20. Everyone else throws a little ball around as quickly as they can. At 19, the one with the ball puts it behind their back. Everyone else puts their hands behind their back, too. The one in the middle has to guess who has the ball. If they guess correctly, the one with the ball moves to the spot in the middle. If they don't guess correctly, they can remain in the middle – or choose a new person to trade places with.

Snowball Questions

Give everyone several little pieces of paper and have them write questions that they would like to ask everyone in the group. (ie, Who is in your family? Do you play a sport? What Meeting do you go to? etc.) When they've got them written, have them crumple them into balls. Then surprise them by starting a snow ball fight with them. After a minute or so, yell Freeze! And everyone has to pick up a paper near them, and then answer that question. Repeat.

That's Me!

Hand out paper. Everyone writes:

1. Something that is true for everyone in the group.
2. Something that is true for at least half of the group.
3. Something that is true for 2 or 3 other people.
4. Something unique just to them.

Collect them, then read one outloud, starting with everyone standing up. As the categories get more specific, people sit down when it doesn't apply to them, until the only one standing is the one who wrote it.

Spanking Yoda

Each person writes a phrase at the top of their paper. This could be anything from "flying pigs" to "hamburgers on fire" or "a cat in a blizzard." Everyone passes the paper to the person on the right. Each person quickly draws a picture of the phrase on their paper (ie, draws a flying pig). Next, each person folds the tops of the paper towards them so that the first phrase is covered and only the picture is visible. The paper is passed again to the right. This time, each person writes a short phrase describing the picture they see as they see it. They fold the top of the paper towards them covering the picture, leaving only the phrase and pass it to the right. This continues until there is no room on the paper left. Unfold the papers and have fun checking out what is basically a "visual Telephone" game.

Big Wind Blows

Everyone sits in a circle of chairs, with one person remaining in the middle. That person says something that is true about them, beginning with the phrase "The Big Wind Blows for everyone that..." (i.e. ...for everyone who is wearing jeans.) Everyone for whom that is true has to move to another seat. The person without a seat then becomes the one in the middle. People cannot just move to the chair next to them in the circle. If the person in the middle says, "Hurricane" everyone has to move.

JHYM Extreme Big Wind Blows: Everyone can continue to trade seats until the person in the middle says "The Big Wind Blows". This raises the game to a higher level of chaos as well as body contact, and is tons of fun, but not recommended for younger children.

The Lap Game

Everyone sits in a circle. One person says something that is true of them. Everyone for whom that statement is true moves one seat to the left. If there is a person sitting in that seat, they sit on the lap of the person already sitting in the seat. The next person says a statement that is true of them....people move... and so on. If someone is sitting on the bottom of a stack of people and the statement is true of them, they get up and move, leaving the rest of the stack below them behind. Make sure everyone understands and is comfortable with this game before playing.

Ducky, Ducky

Everyone in the group but one person sits in a tight circle. The one person without a chair is blindfolded in the middle with a pillow; this person is the duck. The duck should be spun a few times to disorient her/him a bit. The duck then sits on someone's lap with the pillow between them. The duck says: "Ducky, ducky," and the person who is being sat upon responds with "quack, quack," trying to disguise her/his voice. The duck then tries to guess whose lap s/he is sitting on. If the duck guesses correctly, the other person becomes the new duck. If the duck is wrong, s/he moves on to a new lap until s/he guesses correctly.

Common Ground

Split the group into small groups (5-8 people is ideal) and have them go to 4 different corners of the room. Give one person in each group paper and something to write with. Tell everyone that they have 10 minutes to list as many things as possible that all of the members of their group have in common. When time is up, start with one group and ask them to share one thing from their list. Continue around the room (quickly), with each group saying something from their list that hasn't been said before. Celebrate the group that has the most items on their list. Reflect as a whole group on what strategies helped generate ideas. Were some surprised at how much (or how little) they had in common? How often do we stereotype people so that we can find common ground?

From: Great Group Games by Susan Ragsdale and Ann Saylor