

Get to Know You and Establish Group Norms

Uniqueness, Commonalities, and Learning Together



Description

Do this activity before the others in this collection to build trust between group members and establish a foundation for further relationship-building activities. Participants get to know each other through learning what they have in common and what makes them unique. Then participants discuss what they need from the group to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

Objective

- Build and strengthen relationships among participants
- Build and strengthen relationships between participants and leaders

Planning and Preparation

 **Participants:** 5-30

 **Time:** 30 minutes

 **Materials:**

 **Set up:**

- Large sticky poster paper (or tape if poster paper is not sticky)
- Markers
- Ideally a room with walls where participants can put up posters works best, but this activity could be done at tables, desks, or on the floor. If walls are not accessible to hang posters, have participants hold them up during the large group share.

Facilitator Notes

- As the facilitator for this activity, you set the tone. Model respect, participation, and vulnerability/sharing with the participants.
- This activity can include opportunities for participants to co-facilitate. Consider asking participants to serve different roles in their small groups (i.e. recorder, reporter, time-keeper).



Facilitator Instructions

1. Get participants into groups of 4 or 5 (you may want to number off or find another way to make sure participants are mixed up enough that they are not with people they know well already).
2. Let participants know they are going to get to know each other through learning about what they have in common and what is unique about each of them.
3. Have one representative from each group get two pieces of poster paper and a marker. Ask them to tape up the poster papers and draw a large circle (with enough room on the outside for participants to write their names) on one sheet and a large square on the other. (See example below. If you have more than one facilitator, you could do a quick demonstration using yourselves.)
4. Ask participants to introduce themselves to their group, and as they do, they should write their name on the outside of the circle, spaced apart from other names.
5. After each group introduces themselves and writes their names on the outside of the circle, tell them they will have five minutes in their group to figure out five things they all have in common. Encourage participants to think creatively! (Not just simple things like “we’re all in this room.”) Tell them to write these five things in the center circle. If groups figure out five things they have in common quickly, they may add more to their list. Let participants know they will be sharing this with the larger group, so they should include information they are comfortable sharing with everyone.
6. After each group thinks of five things they all have in common, give participants five minutes to figure out one thing that is unique about themselves that they do not share in common with anyone else in the group. Tell participants to share their unique item with the group and write it next to their name. When all participants have shared something unique about themselves the group should think of a team name.
7. Have each group share out with the large group their team name, what they have in common, and what is unique about each person. Be sure each person individually shares their own unique item.

8. Tell each group to turn to the second sheet of poster paper on the wall. Let them know that now that they're starting to get to know each other, it's time to establish some norms about how everyone wants to be treated within the group so they can build strong relationships with one another.
9. Within each small group, invite each person to share one or two things they want from others in order to feel safe sharing their opinions and experiences within the group. You may ask them to think about a time when they have felt safe being themselves and having real, open conversations in a group. What made it work? Each small group should write this on the poster paper within the square.
10. After each small group has completed this, they should choose two or three norms that their group wants to share out with the larger group.



Be creative!

Avoid "We're all in this room" or "we all go to school together"

Putting It Into Practice

- Follow up on any suggestions the group made for ensuring that they are held accountable to following the group norms.
- If possible, hang the list in a place that it is visible throughout the time the group is together.
- From time to time, review the norms and ask if any changes or additions are needed, especially if a new person joins the group.

11. Have each group go one at a time and share out the two or three norms they selected. Encourage groups to pick a new norm if their norm was already shared by a different group. Record what participants say aloud on one sheet of poster paper in the front of the room. (Ask if any of the participants would like to be the recorder). Explain that this list will serve as “ground rules” for how the group will work together.
12. After all the groups have shared their norms, ask if there are other norms people would like to add to the list that are not included so far. Ask if there are any adjustments that participants would make in order to be able to agree with all of the norms on the list.
13. Conclude by leading a discussion using the reflection questions below (you can stay standing in groups or sit down in a circle together).

Reflect

Discuss these questions as a large group:

- Why do you think it might be important to establish group norms?
- Think about a time you were in a group where you didn't feel okay participating or being yourself. What did people say or do that made you not want to participate?
- What could we do as a group to make sure we remember to follow these group norms?
- How should we handle it if someone in the group is not following these group norms?