***Icebreakers, Introductions and Activities***

*Whether you are meeting for the first time or seeing friends you’ve known for a lifetime, a good icebreaker can set a fun and festive mood that is sure to help your group create bonds of friendship. Here are a few ideas for creative ways to get your group activities off to a great start.*

**Unique Characteristics** - Divide the group into pairs and give participants a few minutes to interview each other. Then, each participant should introduce their partners by name and to share at least two unique characteristics about them.

**Your Favorite Things** - Divide the group into pairs and ask participants to tell each other their favorite food or name the animal they feel best describes them and why. This information is shared with the group when participants introduce their partners.

**Ball Toss** - Form a circle and toss a soft ball around the circle. Participants state their names as they catch the ball. After a few minutes, when they catch the ball, they call out the name of the person who tossed it to them.

**Three Questions** - Participants write down three questions and find someone in the room they do not know well. Each participant then asks questions of the other. The participants then introduce their partners to the group by sharing both the questions and the answers.

**Find the Missing Piece** - Prepare pieces of paper, enough for everybody in the group. The papers include words that are split into two, for example:

COCOA BUTTER MILE STONE ICE CREAM

Each person picks one piece of paper and then begins to look for the person who has the matching word. When the participant has found her match, she should get to know the other person. Then, they will be asked to introduce one another to the rest of the group.

An alternative is to use words that are opposites. For example:

BLACK WHITE UP DOWN LEFT RIGHT HOT COLD

**Fact or Fiction** - Each person writes down four facts about themselves, one of which is not true. Each person takes turns reading their list aloud and the rest of the group writes down the one they think is not true. When all are done reading the lists aloud, the first person reads their list again and identifies the fact, which is not true. The group should compare their written responses with the correct answers.

**Nonsense Name Game**- Introduce yourself to the group with a sentence based upon the first letter of your name. Examples:

“I’m kooky Katherine. I like kissing kittens.” “I’m darling Dorothy. I like dancing daily.”

**Name Chain** - You can play “Name Chain” as a followup to the “Nonsense Name Game.”

Introduce yourself and the person to your right. “I’m kooky Katherine. This is darling Dorothy.”

The person to your right repeats previous introductions and introduces the person to their right. “She’s kooky Katherine. I’m darling Dorothy. He’s generous George.”

Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated. Challenge participants to rhyme off all names quickly!

**The Interview** - Break the group into two person teams (have them pick a partner that they know the least about). Have them interview each other for about 10-20 minutes (You can also prepare questions ahead of time or provide general guidelines for the interview). They need to learn about what each other likes about their job, past jobs, family life, hobbies, favorite sport, etc. After the interviews, have each person introduce their partner to the group.

**Ball of Yarn** - For this exercise you will need a ball of yarn. The leader should say her name and an interesting fact about herself. Then, holding the end of the yarn, toss the ball to a participant. The participant will say her name and an interesting fact, then, holding on to part of the yarn, toss the ball to another participant. By the time everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn.

**What Do We Have in Common?** - Split the participants into pairs. Each pair will have 30 seconds to think of five things they have in common. At the end of the 30 seconds, put two pairs together and give the group a minute to find something all four participants have in common. Finally, each group can present the list of things they have in common.

**Tell Us About Yourself** - Pass around a bag of candy. Tell the participants to take as many as they want. Once all the participants have candy, tell them that for each candy they took they have to say one thing about themselves. For instance, if a participant took 10 candies, they would have to say 10 things about themselves.

Note: You can also pass around a roll of toilet tissue. Ask the participants to take as many individual sheets or squares as they think they might need (do not tell them the purpose of the sheets).

**The Last Word** - The participants should stand in a circle. One participant moves and stands randomly in front of another. He/she makes a statement (e.g., “It is such a lovely day”). The person spoken to will move to another person and make a statement starting with the last word in the statement he/she received (e.g., “Day light savings time started this week.”). Each participant takes turns to ensure that everybody gets a chance to participate.

**The Telephon**e - Participants should sit or stand in a circle. The leader quickly whispers a message to one participant. This participant passes the message in a whisper to the next person and so on. The last person shouts out the message. Chances are the final message will be different from the original.

**Super Model**

Arrange participants in a circle.

Instruct participants that they have to act out your instructions. When pointed to and given the following commands:

“Super Model” - Participant should immediately pose as a fashion model. The two participants alongside the participant acting as a super model (the one on the left and the right) take the role of photographers and mimic gestures of taking a photo.

“Elephant”- Participant poses as an elephant by immediately thrusting two hands held together in front to represent the elephant’s trunk. The two participants alongside form a circle with their hands and place them on the side of the participant pointed to serve as “ears” of the elephant.

“Jello” - Participant shakes his or her body like jello continuously. The two participants alongside hold each other’s hands and form a circle around the target participant. The idea is to form a “glass” around the jello.

“Queen Bee” - Participant turns around and puts his or her hands together behind the back (just above the buttocks) and flutters them back and forth to mimic a bee’s tail. The two participants alongside thrust their arms away from the bee and flutter them like wings.

“Donkey” - participant and those alongside him or her should freeze and not move at all

Expect that people will be confused and make mistakes. Such mistakes generate laughter and fun. To make the exercise competitive, participants who make a mistake (both the one pointed to and the two participants alongside him or her) can be eliminated from the game.

**Tell A Story** - The participants should stand in a circle. The purpose of this activity is to build a story with each participant contributing one sentence that must:

Make sense and at the same time add some fun to the activity, Build on to the last sentence, and Be grammatically correct.

For example: #1: “I was walking to breakfast this morning.” #2: “A dog came up to me.” #3: “I said good morning to the dog.” #4: “The dog asked me what I was going to have for breakfast.”

The activity continues until all of the participants have contributed.

**What Do You Have?** - Divide the participants into teams of 4-6 people. Each team should make a list of 6-8 items that they would probably have with them. Make one or two items less common things. The team gets points for each person who has these items. Only one of each item per person can be counted and the team with the most points wins. The list could include: a photograph, a calculator, a pencil, a photograph of a family member, an unusual key chain, something red, etc.

**Brainstorming** - Divide the participants into teams of five people. Ask the teams to list: things that are square, things associated with a holiday, things that are red, things they can make out a coat hanger, etc. The teams are not allowed to discuss, just list items! The team with the most items on their list wins.

**Boo m!** - All participants should sit in a circle. They are instructed to count out loud around the circle. Each person whose number is a multiple of 3 (3-6-9-12, etc.) or a number that ends with 3 (13-23- 33, etc.) must say BOOM! instead of the number. The next person continues the normal sequence of numbers.

Example: The first person starts with 1, the next one says 2, and the person who should say 3 says BOOM! instead, and the next person says 4.

Anyone who fails to say BOOM! or who makes a mistake with the number that follows BOOM! is disqualified.

The numbers must be said rapidly (5 seconds maximum); if a participant takes too long to say her/his number, s/he is disqualified.

The last two participants left are the winners.

Note: You can have the participants “clap” once instead of saying Boom.