

*Developing people
for health and
healthcare*

Icebreaker activities



November 2015

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Icebreaker activities are short and punchy. Some are suitable while sitting in classroom/theatre style; others are tabletop activities for small groups seated around tables, whilst the more energetic ones require movement and more space.

Why use icebreakers?

- Reduce nervousness and apprehension
- Energise and motivate
- Help people get to know one another
- Take the focus off the presenter – thus reducing their anxiety
- Provide a ‘soft start’ – i.e. an activity that allows stragglers to join in late
- Create a good atmosphere for learning and participation
- Encourage young people to break out of their cliques
- Encourage working together
- Help develop social skills
- Build confidence
- Can also be used during a workshop, such as after a break or to get people moving after a talk

Ideas for icebreaker activities

Chat Show – Get the group to pair off and take turns in being a chat show host and guest. The chat show host has to find out three interesting facts in three minutes about their guest. Switch the roles and repeat. Bring everyone back to the big group and ask them to present briefly the three facts about their guest to the group. You could go round the group randomly so people are less aware of their turn coming up next and panic about it.

Fact or Fiction? – Each person writes down three things about themselves which may not be known to the others in the group. Two are true and one is not. Taking turns they read out the three ‘facts’ about themselves and the rest of the group votes which are true and which are false. Alternatively this can be played in the same way as ‘Chat Show’ above.

Three in Common – Break the group into threes. The objective is for each group to find three things they have in common. But not normal things like age, sex or hair colour. It must be three uncommon things. After letting the groups converse for ten to 15 minutes, they (as a group) must tell the other groups the three things they have in common.

Sit Down If – Have a list of questions, each beginning with the phrase “Sit down if you...” Find out who remains standing after each round.

Quick Quiz – Good if repeated at the end to measure an increase in knowledge and perception.

Hands Up – Multiple choice using interesting facts and statistics.

Corners – Ask questions and have students go to the 'ABCD' corners – similar to the above but gets students moving.

Who Knows? – Asking who knows somebody who works for the NHS.

What's My Line? – 20 questions to find out what I do.

Props – Hand out props and ask students what they are used for.

Who Am I? – Write the names of famous people or other characters on post-it notes (one for each student). Keeping the names hidden, stick the notes on the foreheads of everyone in the group. They must then ask questions of the others to find out their identity. Each person takes a turn to ask questions and figure out who they are. For example, Am I alive? Am I female? Only yes or no questions can be asked. If the answer is no, their turn is over. If the answer is yes, they can ask another question and keep going until they get a no, or guess who they are. Keep playing until everyone has guessed or, if time is short, stop after the first few correct answers.

Rebel Foot – This is a good exercise for self-awareness and releasing tension in a session. Make sure that the members of the group are sitting comfortably. Now ask them to lift their right feet off the floor and make clockwise circles and, while doing this, draw the number 6 in the air with their right hands. Their feet will change direction and there's nothing they can do about it!