



Our Gift to You: Icebreaker Activities

Icebreaker activities for early childhood professionals should be engaging, interactive and low threat to create a positive and comfortable environment. There should always be an “Observer” role for those who do not wish to participate...however, with a strong culture of support, you will find that most people are willing! Here are some examples to try at your next event:

1. **Name Game:** Have participants form a circle and take turns saying their names while incorporating a movement or action (for example--patting head; clapping). The next person repeats the previous name and action then adds their own.

** When you have new staff members, offer multiple opportunities for participants to learn one another’s names. This strengthens your group culture and supports connection among your staff. Other examples are:

- a. Name tents on tables with hand drawn pictures of meaningful items or preferences.
- b. Learning the names of a small group first, then mixing groups later.
- c. Introducing the person next to you with two facts.
- d. Show and Tell with two items from purse or backpack
- e. “Find your partner” as a group mingle activity. Participants move around room speaking to one another with personal information until they find someone who shares a similarity. They call out “I have a partner!” and share the details.
- f. “Never Have I Ever” game with an early childhood focus (“NHIE...climbed a jungle gym.”) Those who match that call out, “Me neither!”

2. **Two Truths and a Lie:** Each participant shares three statements about themselves, two of which are true and one that is false. The group tries to guess which statement is the lie.

3. **Play Doh Introductions:** Provide each participant with a small can of playdough (party favor sizes are available at Wal-Mart and party stores). Ask the participants to create something that represents them or their interests. They introduce themselves by explaining their creation.

4. **Group Jigsaw Puzzle:** Divide participants into small groups and provide each group with a jigsaw puzzle. (24 piece puzzles are recommended and can then go into preschool classrooms.) Encourage teamwork and collaboration as they work together to complete the puzzle. For added challenge, especially if you have a staff that already knows each other well, select one piece from each puzzle and mix it in with another group's puzzle pieces. Goal is for participants to realize that another group could assist them in completing their puzzle.

5. **Musical Chairs with a Twist:** Arrange chairs in a circle, with one less chair than the number of participants. Play music while participants walk around the chairs. When the music stops, everyone finds a seat. The person left standing shares something about themselves and then takes over the music.

6. **Storytelling Chain:** Start a story with a few sentences and pass it on to the next participant, who adds a few more sentences. Continue this chain until everyone has contributed to the story.

7. **Marshmallow Tower:** Provide each small group with a zip lock bag with either toothpicks or straws in it (half of the groups get each). Participants discuss which they prefer before knowing the purpose of the activity. After this brief discussion, provide each group with a zip lock bag of marshmallows and ask them to build the tallest tower that they can using only the materials that they have.

8. **Guess Who?:** Each participant has a sticky note to write an interesting fact about themselves on without revealing their name. Collect the notes and read them aloud for the group to guess who the fact belongs to.

9. **Speed Networking:** Arrange participants in pairs and give them a set amount of time (1- 1.5 minutes) to have a quick conversation. When time is up, they rotate and find a new partner. Repeat several times for participants to have the opportunity to meet a variety of people. For more structure, divide the group into two equal lines, facing each other. Pairs across from each other talk, then ONLY ONE line moves to the left or right (depending on your room arrangement and space). After each match-up, the same line stays in place while the other line moves. The same line moves throughout the activity.

10. **Sentence Completion:** Provide sentence starters related to early childhood education such as "My favorite thing about block center is..." or "One thing I always ask parents is...". Participants consider their answers for a brief time then share around the group. This is a good transition activity to end or begin new sessions.