



Michigan Dept. of Community Health Project Success
In partnership with the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute
Successfully Employing Your Personal Assistant TTT

Introductory, Warm Up & Energizer Activities

Beginning training sessions with warm introductions starts you off on the right foot. It invites people to actively participate. It encourages them to get to know one another. It sets the stage for having everyone learn from one another. And, it helps build connections and community – it warms and livens up the room. Large gatherings and too little time may make introductions difficult, but, even with limited time, you can have people introduce themselves to one or two others they are sitting next to.

Introductions can be done in a number of ways, including:

- In the large group, start with a volunteer and then move in a circle to everyone.
- Pair people together. You can ask people to do introductions with the person they are sitting next to. If you want to ensure that people who do not know one another get a chance to meet and talk, have people call out numbers to half of the total class, and then start at one again. Then, have people pair with the person who called out the same number for the exercise. It can also be good to have partners introduce the person they spoke with during introductions.
- Form people into small groups of 3-5 people to do the introductions. This may work well with a large group.

Select the option that will work best with your time-frame and your sense of how shy people are and how challenging they will find speaking with one another.

For a single session or the first session of a series have people introduce themselves individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Ask for specific additional information as appropriate and/or to have some fun, such as:

- Where are you from?
- How did you get your name? What's the interesting story behind it?
- How long have you been a consumer or in self-direction?
- What agencies and/or organizations are you active in?
- What's your favorite thing about Michigan?

Flip chart the questions you want everyone to answer to help participants remember and give yourself a visual way to remind them of the questions.

Another first session activity can be to have one of a pair of words on the back of the table tents you give participants, such as 'salt' and 'pepper,' 'bread' and 'butter,' 'peanut butter' and 'jam,' 'sun' and 'shine,' 'moon' and 'stars,' 'day' and 'night.' Once everyone has sat down and put their names on their table tents, have them look on the back and see what word they have. Then, have them find their "partner" and conduct the introductory activity with that person.

Introductory Activities for Groups Who Know Each Other or for Follow-Up Sessions:

Here are a variety of options if you are running a series of classes, and want to do introductions to build community among the participants and help everyone learn and remember each other's names.

1. **Name reminders:** Invite individuals to come to the front of the room, if that is easy to do. Otherwise, it can be done from people's seats. Ask participants if they remember the individual's name, and what **reminder words or ideas they might use to help recall the person's name**, e.g. "Super Sue," "Able Abe." Then ask each individual to tell the group one or two more things about themselves that they'd like to share.
2. **Stand Up/Sit Down:** Ask everyone to stand up (or raise their hands). Ask people to sit down or lower their hands if the following (or you can make up your own categories!) are not true of them. When you get to one or two people remaining, ask them to introduce themselves and say a little more about the topic:
 - Sit down or put your hands down unless you have one pet. OK, now sit down unless you have two 2 pets. Continue with 3 pets, 4 pets, 5 pets...
 - Sit down or put your hands down unless you have a hobby that means a lot to you. Unless you have 2 hobbies, 3 hobbies, 4 hobbies...
 - Sit down or put your hands down if you do not have any children. OK, now sit down unless you have 2 or more children. Continue with 3 children, 4 children, 5 children...
 - Sit down or put your hands down unless you've been a consumer of long-term supports and services for more than one year, more than two years, more than five years, more than ten years...
3. **Faces:** Have enough **copies of pictures or graphics of various faces** available and lay them out on a table so that participants can view them as they come to the session. Invite them to pick a picture that they like, or that reflects how they're feeling. Have everyone introduce themselves by showing their picture and explaining why they selected it.
4. **Quotes:** Have a set of inspirational quotes laid out on a table for participants to read and invite each person to pick the quote they like the best. **Each person shares a quote and explains why it's meaningful to him or her.**

5. **Asking questions of each other:** Ask participants to **throw the koosh ball to someone they haven't yet gotten to know, and ask them any question they'd like.** If throwing the ball isn't easy, just have them call out to the person they wish to ask a question of. Give them some as suggestions, such as:
 - a. Who inspires you and why? OR, Who do you admire and why?
 - b. What scares you?
 - c. What's your favorite movie?
 - d. What do you love most about Michigan? OR, What do you like least about Michigan?
 - e. What are your favorite things to do?
 - f. What's your least or most favorite time of day and why?
 - g. If you had unlimited resources, what would you do?
 - h. How/why are you different at home than at work?
 - i. What would you do if you won the lottery?
 - j. What would you do if you had two extra hours every day?
6. **Carousel:** Have participants line up in a row facing on another. Ask partners facing one another to answer a question related to the training they've been participating in, such as: *What was the highlight for you of our last training session?"* After a minute or so, encourage them to make sure each has a chance to speak. After a two or three minutes, ask one person at one end to walk to the far opposite end of the line, and for everyone on that side to move down. Ask everyone to speak to their new partner, answering another question, such as: *"How will you apply what you've learned in the training so far in your life and/or work?"* Repeat instructions, and continue trading partners and asking another question or two, such as: *"What will be most challenging for you as you try to apply what you've learned?"*
7. **Thumbs-up:** A quick option for a group that's been meeting together a while might be: **ask the group to report how they were feeling as the session starts by giving a 'thumbs-up,'** a 'thumbs-down,' or a shake of their hand to convey a 'so-so.' Then ask for quick reports on why people are feeling the way they are feeling.
8. **What Fills Your Bucket?** Invite participants to fill out the attached handout by describing what energizes them and fills them with good feeling, what drains them, and what they value most about what they have to offer when they have their best energy. Give everyone a few minutes to fill this out, and then ask a volunteer to start by sharing his or her answers.
9. **Things in Common:** Invite pairs to identify within 3 minutes everything they have in common that no one could tell by looking at them, and then introduce each other, sharing all that they have identified.

Ask participants to look around the room and **find the person that they think they have the least in common with.** Have them pair up with each other and find five things that the two of them have in common. A version of this is what "uncommon" things you have in common – the more uncommon the better! (*Thanks to Karen Stobbe, www.in-themoment.com*)

10. **Introduce yourself and give examples of how you would complete the sentence starters: “I feel respected when...,” and “I feel supported when...”** Ask everyone to introduce themselves and complete both phrases with their own answers. Flip chart the answers and have a discussion about the implications for themselves in their role as consumer employers.
11. **Assumptions activity:** Ask each participant to **write two things about themselves that they believe others would not be likely to think about them and that they are willing to share.** Collect these and read one fact from a form (include instructors!). Ask the group who they think the fact is true of. Once people have guessed, ask, “*Why did you choose the person you did?*” This is an opportunity to explore our assumptions about others based on appearance or other factors, and hopefully, to have the experience of our assumptions proving wrong. Read one for each person as one exercise, and/or read one or two statements as energizing breaks throughout the session.
12. **Tattoos:** Another quick and fun **assumptions exercise** is to ask everyone to jot down **who else in the room has tattoos.** Once people have a minute to consider this, the facilitator can ask who one volunteer selected, and find out how many others guessed this person. Then, the person can say if they do or do not have tattoos and the group can describe why they picked them. Go through all the guesses and then see if someone has tattoos who wasn’t suggested by the group. Explore everyone’s assumptions, highlight the uncertainty of assumptions, celebrate the ways they were perceptive, and suggest how often we leap to conclusions in ways that can hinder our ability to really listen and come to know other people.
13. **Right or wrong?** Ask each person to **write two things that are true about themselves on an index card and one that is false (but plausible).** Have them read the cards and invite the rest of the group to say which one was the false statement. Explore the assumptions that are revealed by the guesses. (*Thanks to Karen Stobbe, www.in-themoment.com*)
14. **Fill brown paper lunch bags with small items** (one each – a crayon, a tea bag, a stuffed animal, a box of jello, a bar of soap, a candle, a nut, coins, a measuring spoon, etc.) and give one to each participant. **Ask each person to introduce themselves, using the object to illustrate some aspect of themselves** or their lives they’d like to share. (*Thanks to Karen Stobbe, www.in-themoment.com*)
15. **When I’m 80:** Distribute index cards and pens/pencils and invite participants to answer questions you’ve written on the flipchart. Note that are not to write their names on the cards.

When I am 80

Where do I hope to be living?

How do I hope to be spending my days?

What about me will change?

What about me won't change?

After everyone has written answers on the index cards, collect the cards, shuffle them, and redistribute them to participants. Have each person read the answers and guess whose card it is. Let others help if they can't guess. When the right person is identified, have that person introduce themselves and their role in their organization or why they are at the training.

16. Leader/Follower: Have each person stand up and pick a partner. Give instructions: *"Introduce yourselves to each other. Now, face your partner and look directly at each other. Determine **who will lead and who will follow.**"* Pause to let them choose their roles. Continue with instructions: *"When I say 'go,' the leader should begin to make movements. The follower's role is to mime exactly what the leader is doing. After a few moments, I'll announce when it's time to change roles and transfer leadership to your partner and do the same thing. I'll transfer leadership several times."* Conduct the exercise for 2-3 minutes, changing roles 2-3 times. Then, lead a discussion with the following questions:

- *What was it like for you to be the leader?*
- *What was it like for you to be the follower?*
- *What was it like to change leadership?*

17. My neighborhood: Have participants pair with another person, and discuss the following questions with one another:

- the name and place of **the neighborhood where you lived as a child** (pick the favorite if you lived in multiple)
- a sound or a smell that you remember from that neighborhood
- your favorite thing to do in that neighborhood OR your favorite place to be in that neighborhood
- a person who lived in the neighborhood who was important to you

After a few minutes, debrief by asking participants what they shared and what they felt and realized about their neighborhoods.

Triathlon Energizer – If a group seems distracted, or if they've been sitting still too long, a fun way to give everyone a chance to stretch is to call for a "Triathlon." Have participants suggest three of their favorite sports (you might also let them suggest dances – the monkey, the twist, etc.). Then, as the instructor calls out, everyone spends 20 seconds doing their best rendition of each sport, as well as they can. This gets everyone laughing as well as moving!

For more ideas, please see:

West, Edit (October, 1996). 201 Icebreakers. Mc-Graw Hill Trade



How Full is Your Bucket?



What fills your bucket?

What drains you?



What do you value most about what you have to offer when you feel your best energy?

