

# BREAK THE ICE



## Activities that Lead to a Powerful Conversation

### *ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES*

Here are a few of our favorite, tried-and-true icebreakers... but feel free to make up your own or come up with your own techniques for getting your guests to feel comfortable opening up and expressing themselves without fear or shyness so you can all come together at the end of the meeting with some common understandings and next steps for action.

Of course, you know your guests, and will have the best sense for what will make them feel comfortable. Some of these activities may be too silly or too stilted for your guests.

### **Icebreaker Questions**

This is probably the simplest icebreaker suggestion. Just ask some simple questions. Here are some ideas, but feel free to come up with your own!!

- What's your all-time favorite movie and why?
- What's your all-time favorite book and why?
- If you could be a back-up singer for a famous musician, who would it be?
- What is your guilty pleasure TV show, movie, music, or author?
- If you had to pick one food to eat every day for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- If you reincarnated, what would you like to come back as?

### **I Stand (Here)**

This activity will help you get a sense of the variety of opinions among your guests, and helps them get to know each other. You can use as many/few questions as you wish, but don't start with the last one...you need to build up to it with less consequential questions. (Aim for 5-7 minutes total time.)

1. Create an imaginary line in the front of the room. On the far left is one extreme; on the far right, the other.
2. Ask your guests to respond to your questions by declaring the strength of their positions by their spot on the line. If the guest has a neutral opinion, they stand somewhere along the middle, depending on the strength of their opinion. Here are some sample questions:
  - Do you prefer winter or summer?
  - Do you prefer coffee or tea?
  - Boxers or briefs?
  - City or countryside?
  - Welcome families who risked everything for a better future or keep borders closed just in case?

### **Journalist for a Day**

This activity is helpful for groups that you think might be quiet or nervous about speaking in front of others.

1. Break into pairs. One person is the “reporter” and the other is the “subject.”
2. Give your guests 2-3 minutes for the reporters to ask pointed questions to find out three interesting things about their subject. (It’s no fair to ask, “What are the three most interesting things about you?”)
3. The reporter then reports what they learned to the rest of the group. If you have time, you can switch roles and repeat!

### **String Theory**

You need a little preparation for this. Buy a roll of string. Cut it into a variety of lengths, from as short as about 12 inches to as long as 30 inches or so. When you’ve cut enough strings so there’s at least one for as many guests as you expect, bunch all the pieces into one clump.

1. Ask a guest to volunteer to go first, and have them choose a string.
2. Ask them to introduce themselves as they slowly wind the piece of string around their index finger. They talk as long as it takes them to completely wind the string.
3. The icebreaker becomes funny when folks choose the extremely longer strings, and must keep their introduction going.

### **What Would I Have Done**

This activity focuses on exploring different paths in life...a good set-up for the topic to come. This needs a little preparation on your part too.

1. Think up a number of different life events that you think most of your guests can relate to (some ideas: first kiss, first job, family home, school embarrassment, best friend, musical instrument, sports moment, etc.).
2. Place all the folded slips of paper into a container and have each guest, one at a time, draw a slip, read it out loud, then tell the group what originally happened in their life connected to the word, and then speculate on what or whether they would have liked to try something different instead. (Just make sure no one talks for too crazy long!)

Of course, this helps prepare your guests for thinking about the monkey wrenches (or worse) that come along in life, and how they might deal with them. Putting themselves in the shoes of another, and wondering what they would have done in the same circumstances helps them empathize with the plight of refugees.