



PHILADELPHIA
OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

BACK TO SCHOOL

*Our Favorite Activities
From This Summer*



EMOTIONS FISHBOWL

Activity Instructions

The person leading the activity will ask participants to bring 5 index cards and a writing utensil (markers are fun if they have them) to the meeting. Participants are asked to write 5 emotions, one on each card, that describe feelings they have experienced in the past week. Participants are encouraged to write legibly, but to stylize their words to reflect the emotion. Then, either in the main session, or in breakout rooms, participants will have others guess one emotion at a time on their cards.

Round 1:

Participants show a face that describes an emotion. Once an emotion is guessed, another participant will start the process again, until all emotions have been guessed (or however it works best within your timeframe).

Round 2:

Participants describe each emotion while refraining from using the word that's on their card (ex. "sad" could be described as "a sinking feeling in your stomach" or "when you're experiencing low energy"). Facilitator could debrief on the concept that different emotions may feel differently to different people.

CATEGORY:

Emotions Check In

AUDIENCE:

All

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Self-Awareness & Social-Awareness

MATERIALS:

Paper and pen/marker

TIME:

15 minutes

CREDIT: Project Adventure

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EMOTIONS FISHBOWL

Facilitator Observations

“I like Emotions Fishbowl because it hits multiple participant needs in one activity. Participants get some time to individually reflect on their own emotional responses to a given event or time period. The guessing part is pretty fun because folx make exaggerated facial expressions to help the group guess that emotion. And folx are sharing real emotions that they really experienced in a group setting in an non-threatening way, and the facilitator can use it as a jumping off point to further explore how folx are doing, or to look into the similar and different ways that we emote and read each other’s emotions.”

– Jack Organ





FEELINGS WHEEL

Activity Instructions

The person leading the session will share a feelings wheel and ask participants to identify a feeling on the feelings wheel that represents how they currently feel (or feel about a particular activity or prompt). Facilitators will ask participants to identify a feeling, and then take 5 minutes to draw or doodle what that emotion looks or sounds like to them. If participants want to name an emotion not included on the emotions wheel, encourage them to do so.

CATEGORY:

EMOTIONS
CHECK-IN

AUDIENCE:

Young Adults

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Self-reflection &
Empathy

MATERIALS:

A feelings wheel of
your choice

TIME:

10 minutes

CREDIT: Dr. Gloria Wilcox



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FEELINGS WHEEL

Facilitator Observations

“I appreciate the time I spent either observing or facilitating this experience with students and staff. Individuals often shared detailed information about their feelings and emotions related and unrelated to the pandemic, and had fun acting out and guessing the feelings. It was balanced with speaking and movement.”

– Kim Glodek





TRIAD COMMONALITIES

Activity Instructions

The person leading the activity will split the larger group into smaller triads of 3. Once in smaller groups, they have 8 minutes to figure out 3 things they have in common with each other. Facilitator can encourage the group to go beyond the surface level of "we all go to the same school" and create an incentive, or challenge, for groups to "dig deep" and find commonalities that are unique and specific to that group. After a set amount of time, bring the small groups back and invite them to share what is special and unique about their small group!

CATEGORY:

COMMUNITY
BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

All

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Social-Awareness

MATERIALS:

None

TIME:

10 minutes

CREDIT: POBS Program Team





TRIAD COMMONALITIES

Facilitator Observations

“After the participants completed the activity, they were asked how difficult or easy the task was. The majority of participants agreed that it was more difficult than imagined, but rewarding because once they got talking, they realized they weren’t so different after all.”

– Lauren Stables





CONNECT 4 TREASURES

Activity Instructions

The person leading this activity may send this prompt out prior to the session, or introduce it prior to a scheduled break. The leader will ask participants to collect 4 treasures/ items within their home that represent the following:

(1) An item that reminds them of their strength (2) An item that reminds them of a person they trust (3) An item that reminds them of something challenging they have overcome (4) An item that reminds them of what they want in their future.

Remind participants that if they cannot physically bring the item back, to draw a picture of it! When the group returns, ask participants to share one or all of their items. Invite participants to revisit these items as daily reminders. For multi-sessions, the leader may ask the group to share one of their items over the course of 4 sessions.

CATEGORY:

COMMUNITY
BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

All

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Self-Awareness &
Social-Awareness

MATERIALS:

Paper and
pen/marker

TIME:

10-15 minutes

CREDIT: POBS Program Team

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CONNECT 4 TREASURES

Facilitator Observations

“I love this simple, direct activity. No tricks, frills, or complex instructions. Instead, this activity gets down to the heart of what we’ve all been craving and needing over these past few months – human connectivity and reflection. This activity encourages participants to be vulnerable and share, which naturally promotes community, trust, and honest conversation. Furthermore, it allows participants to actively practice gratitude for what we have, while setting aims for the future!”

– Dan Hoffman





VALUES SHIELDS

Activity Instructions

The person leading the session will ask participants to get the required materials and prompt participants to design a shield that represents their personal values using words, images, shapes, whatever they would like. Participants may write a list of their personal values (probably no more than 4) to give them some direction in their design. Give 10-15 minutes for shield creation. Participants can then share their shields with the group if they would like, and explain what is on their shield, and why that value is important to them.

CATEGORY:

COMMUNITY
BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

Youth

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Self-Awareness &
Social-Awareness

MATERIALS:

Optional – paper
and pen/marker

TIME:

15 minutes





VALUES SHIELDS

Facilitator Observations

“It was really cool to hear from individual students about what values were important to them and to hear in that activity how many folx said similar values. The engagement and energy around the group value shield came on like a waterfall. It was hard to keep track of all the group values they were saying. Great activity to get on the same page and learn more about who you’re on a team with.”

– Olive Fine





ENERGY BALL

Activity Instructions

The facilitator leading the session will start with a "ball of energy!" They will ask participants to visualize the ball - What color is it?, What shape is it?, etc. The facilitator will call the name of one of their peers and "toss them the ball." Continue playing until everyone has tossed and received the imaginary ball! You can add challenge by throwing a second "ball" while the first one is still going or time how quickly the group can complete the task!

CATEGORY:

ICEBREAKER/TEAM BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

Youth

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Collaboration, Active Listening, Imagination

MATERIALS:

None

TIME:

5-10 minutes

CREDIT: Karl Rohnke Adaptation





ENERGY BALL

Facilitator Observations

“I really like this activity at the beginning of a program as an energizer – it’s even in the name! Not only does it give participants an opportunity to be creative, but it also encourages everybody to turn their cameras and microphones on if they are able to. They are engaging one another in a sweet, simple, and funny way. Participants often end the activity with smiles and laughter.”

– Lottie Appel





SPACE SETTLERS

Activity Instructions

The person leading this activity will do so while screen sharing linked template materials. In this activity, participants will assume the role of a crew of astronauts tasked with starting a human settlement on a new planet. In 2 rounds, they must choose 15 people from a list of 28 applicants (to be shown on screen) to inhabit the settlement and begin a functioning society. All decisions must be unanimous.

ROUND 1

The group will have 20 minutes to make their 15 choices.

ROUND 2

Move on to the next slide, which will have an extra bit of information about each "applicant." With this new information, the group will have 5 minutes to switch up to 5 choices based on the new information. The titles and facts about each "applicant" can be adapted to reflect people represented in the group, your organization, or be randomized.

CATEGORY:

ICEBREAKER/TEAM BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

All

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Group Decision Making

MATERIALS:

[Space Settlers Template](#)

TIME:

30 minutes





SPACE SETTLERS

Facilitator Observations

“This has quickly become my favorite activity because of the huge sci-fi story behind it. I love how it allows the group to tap into their imagination and become invested in this challenge. This activity is a perfect way to put group decision making skills to the test, and it’s interesting to see what different groups will prioritize when picking their space team. To whoever’s facilitating this activity in the future, I recommend playing around with editing the names and people on the cards in the game to fit the students’ interests and spark different conversations.”

– Geo Meneses





TRAFFIC JAM

Activity Instructions

The person leading the activity will present participants with a puzzle that involves an odd number of tiles (organized in a straight line) and an even number of moveable puzzle pieces. Half of the pieces are occupying the tiles on the left side of the board and the other half are occupying the tiles on the right side of the board, with one tile left empty in the center (i.e. A A _ B B). The goal of the activity is to move the pieces from each side to the opposite side (effectively switching places with the pieces opposite of them). For example, right to left, and left to right, B B _ A A). However, there are rules to movement, and those rules are as follows:

1. All pieces may only move in the direction of their goal, they cannot move backward.
2. Any piece may only move into an open tile, two pieces may not share a tile.
3. A piece can move forward by either moving directly into an open space in front of it; or, jumping over another piece into an open tile on the opposite side (no more than one piece may be jumped at a time, and you can't skip over two pieces in a row).
4. If the pieces are moved to a point where no more moves can be made, then the board resets and the puzzle starts over.

The puzzle is solved when the correct sequence of movement is found and all of the pieces are on their new sides! The simplest version is 5 tiles and 4 pieces, and there is a significant jump in difficulty once you increase to 7 tiles and 6 pieces (go much larger than that and it becomes incredibly challenging!)

CATEGORY:

TEAM BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

All (the younger the group the simpler the puzzle)

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Group Problem Solving,
Communication of Ideas, Collaboration

MATERIALS:

[Jamboard Template](#)

TIME:

20-30 minutes





TRAFFIC JAM

Facilitator Observations

“The reason I have recently rediscovered my love for this activity is because of its nature as a truly challenging and interactive puzzle. As we’ve transitioned to working with students in the virtual world, a lot of the games and activities that we’ve been embracing have been focused on the question, ‘How do we get students engaged and make connections with them virtually?’ The result has led us to a lot of activities with a focus on fun and making connections, but not quite as much challenge. This activity can be an exciting and surprisingly interactive challenge for your students if they are starting to seem a little ‘funned out’ or are itching to really get some use out of those brain muscles! Particular struggles groups may face with this game include: conceptual problem solving, communicating thought processes with one another, learning to solve problems as a group, and finding a role in a team when something feels too challenging.”

– Jeff Ladnier

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REMOTE ISLANDS

Activity Instructions

The person leading the activity will present the following dilemma to the group: "You and your team are about to visit a remote island together for 7 days! In your small group you must collectively decide on (1) thing to bring to the remote island. The items selected must benefit the whole group and all members must agree. The leader will then split the large group into breakout rooms of 3-5. After 5 minutes, the leader will invite everyone back in to present what they will bring and why it is important for the whole group. You may also ask a large group to determine 5 things they will bring if breakout rooms are not accessible.

CATEGORY:

TEAM BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

All

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Creative thinking, decision-making, compromise

MATERIALS:

None

TIME:

10-20 minutes



CREDIT: POBS Program Team

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REMOTE ISLANDS

Facilitator Observations

“What I find so great about this activity is the way it breaks down barriers, and causes the participants to come up with some of the most interesting and mind boggling answers! This usually ends with some good laughs, and thought-provoking strategies, while discussing which items they would be bringing with them. It also deftly requires people to work together and get on the same wavelength, as you can see participants forming this item in their individual minds, and eventually becoming one mind, one thought, one team. Hence the barriers being broken down and a true team forming can take place.”

– Brock Weir





WHITEBOARD XEROX

Activity Instructions

The person leading the activity will need to find simple images for the participants to draw and describe. Then, the facilitator will split participants into breakout rooms. One person will be designated as an “artist” while the other will be the director. If you want to have a breakout room of more than 2, you can have multiple drawers, but it's best to stick with one director.

Only the person in the director role will be able to view the image assigned to their group. The director will have 5 minutes to describe the image to the artist(s) in an attempt to have the artist replicate the image to scale! The director cannot use words that explicitly describe exactly what the picture is, but must find other ways to communicate! Participants will come back together, reveal their images, and discuss the challenges and overall communication strategy. If participants do a second round, the partners will alternate roles while using a second image to replicate.

CATEGORY:

TEAM BUILDING

AUDIENCE:

High School &
Adult

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Communication,
Social-Awareness,
Perspective

MATERIALS:

Zoom whiteboard
and this [Image](#)

TIME:

10-20 minutes

CREDIT: POBS Program Team

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WHITEBOARD XEROX

Facilitator Observations

“What separates this activity from other activities I’ve facilitated, is the amount of problem solving, critical thinking, and precise communication it requires. It was first time I saw the students really begin to struggle with a challenge. There was a moment where students were trying different things and getting slightly flustered that some of their attempts were not working. You could watch on the whiteboard as the students made progress . . . slowly. I believe if they were given more time, or a moment to step away and come back with a strategy, they would have had much more positive results. Although the students were not able to fully complete the drawing, we were able to debrief the activity with a conversation on the importance of understanding each other’s perspectives and communication styles.”

– Jeremy Cothran





QUOTE SCRAMBLE

Activity Instructions

The person leading the activity will share a slide or Jamboard with participants that has a scrambled quote on it. The facilitator can choose the quote. For a reference, a quote of 8 words would generally be considered "easy" while the difficulty of the activity will increase based off the size of the quote. Participants must work together to unscramble the quote, and then discuss it in a large group. After they have the quote unscrambled, facilitator can debrief by talking about the message and meaning of the quote itself.

The facilitator could consider having 3 different quotes with varying challenge levels in order to create a progression for participants.

CATEGORY:

ICEBREAKER

AUDIENCE:

Adult

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Collaboration,
Communication

MATERIALS:

Scrambled quote

TIME:

10+ minutes

CREDIT: Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School

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QUOTE SCRAMBLE

Facilitator Observations

“Students really liked this one! I think it’s challenging enough that they have the opportunity to work together and debate, but almost always end with some amount of success. It’s also pretty easy to customize for difficulty, and you can relate it to almost any theme based off the quote you choose.”

– Laura Gates





SCHEDULE A PROGRAM CONSULTATION WITH OUR TEAM

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