

# Icebreaker, Energizer and Recap Activities

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## Why use Energizers and Icebreakers?

Energizers and icebreakers are great for team building, getting to know each other, getting people to think about a specific topic, or simply just to wake up a sleepy and tired group. Some things to consider when using energizers:

- Try to use energizers frequently during a workshop or meeting. Whenever people look sleep or tired or to create a natural break between activities.

## Icebreakers!

Interactive ways for participants to introduce themselves and to learn about the other workshop/training participants. Icebreakers help set a "safe space" for participants to learn and share. You will likely want to do more than one of these, at least one name game and one activity that involves personal sharing.

1. **Name + adjective(s)** : have participants introduce themselves positively with one or two adjectives beginning with the same letter as the initial of their first name. For example: *Reliable Robert* or *Funny, Fabulous Fernanda*
2. **Name + action symbol** : standing up participants form a circle or U-shape. First person says their name and then come up with an action symbol (ex- karate move or dance movement). The next person repeats the name and action symbol of the person before them, then says their names and adds their action symbol. The next person repeats the name and action symbol of everyone before them and then adds their own. Repeat until everyone in the group has gone.
3. **Stand up. Sit Down** : the facilitator says a phrase and those for whom the statement is true stand up, those for whom it is false sit down (i.e. "I have a pet." or "This is my first training session." or "I hate bananas" or "I best like to work on my own rather in teams."). After each phrase, you can invite those standing to sit back down again -- or if they are incremental topics, you can say "stay standing if ...". Start with not-too-personal subjects and subjects that will likely cause a lot of people to stand, then move on to more sensitive areas once folks get more comfortable.
4. **Find your Match** : give each participant a slip of paper with information on it that is relevant to the topic or participants in general. They have to find the corresponding participant with the same information, introduce themselves, and talk briefly about what the information means to them. You can also do this with animals that they have to act out, it works really well as both an energizer and a way to pair up.
5. **HELLO exercise** : Hello is an opener that directly relates to the workshop process and content. It uses a deck of playing cards and a few other items. The basic idea is that you prepare four questions related to individuals' expectations, experience, questions and changes regarding the training. Teams of players are charged with the task of collecting responses from everyone in the room in just a few minutes time. The exercise is high energy and lets participants meet one another, while remaining focused on the day's agenda.
6. **One minute intros**: Everyone in the group gets one minute (need a firm timekeeper for this!) to introduce themselves in whatever way they want. This allows for different types of expression such as dance, song, or just speaking.
7. **Ball Name Game**:
  - a. *Goal*. Getting people standing up and learning each others names.
  - b. *How to Play*: Stand in a circle. Explain that when someone throws the ball to you you say your name and one 'fun fact'. (Favorite food, favorite color, etc.) So for the first half of the game if you catch the ball you say your name and your fact. "My name is Courtney and I like chocolate." Once everyone has said their name. You go all the way around again, but switch to saying the name and fun fact about who you are throwing to, "This is Jeremy and he likes Herb Popcorn."
  - c. *Supplies needed*: Ball
  - d. *Ideal Group Size*: 7-25
  - e. *Duration*: About 10 minutes
8. **Noah's Ark**:
  - a. *Goal*. Getting people moving; breaking participants up into pairs/groups, or new seating arrangements. Has also been useful to break-up serious trainings and be silly
  - b. *How to Play*: Organizer cuts up paper into small slips. (The number of slips should equal the number of people in the activity). Come up with a list of animals common in the respective country (i.e in Tanzania, we did hippos, giraffe, lions, snakes, antelope etc). Write out the animals on individual slips of paper to throw in the pot, such that two of each (or 3, or 4 etc however many people you want in a group) will be in the pot. Have everyone in the room pick up a slip (without reading it outloud). Have everyone act out what's on their slip, and find their partner(s). This game can also be adapted beyond animals, for anything that comes in pairs/groups (i.e rice + beans, vanilla +

chocolate, mother + baby etc), and can also be extended to resemble the game '20 questions'. For the '20 questions' adaptation, attached the slips of paper to participants' backs without them knowing what it is; participants must then walk around and ask each other yes or no questions to find out what they are, and then resume to find their partner with a matching slip/pair.

- c. *Supplies needed:* Paper; Pen; Something to hold paper slips in (like a bowl or a hat)
- d. *Ideal Group Size:* 8 or above (best with big groups)
- e. *Duration:* 5-10 minutes

#### 9. Peer Introductions:

- a. *Goal:* Get people interacting with lots of other people, and facilitate introductions
- b. *How to Play:* Each person gets a piece of paper. They go around, introduce themselves to 6 people, ask them to share one fact about themselves, which they write down. After everyone has collected 6 facts, each person is introduced one at a time. For each person, everyone else in the group shares the facts they learned about that individual. This is often a fun way to learn something about the participants.
- c. *Supplies needed:* Piece of paper
- d. *Ideal Group Size:* 15-20
- e. *Duration:* 10 minutes

## Energizers!

Activities to boost energy levels among participants. Useful to break-up info-heavy sessions or to get everyone back into the groove after lunch.

1. **Are we together?!** - Every time you say "are we together" everyone responds with "yes we are together!" and puts their hands in the air. Do it a few times until they are loud, people love this and it has the added benefit of making them put their phones down.
2. **Good news!** : Trainer ask the participants to share something good that has happened lately to them. Group clapping in between participant answers is a good way to keep the momentum going and also acknowledge the person's good news.
3. **Thunderstorm** : Trainer starts by saying "rain" while simultaneously drumming on a table or chair imitating the sound of rain. Instructs participants to do the same, slowing increasing the speed of the drumming/raining. Suddenly, when it's pouring rain, training slaps their hands together and shouts "lightning!" multiple times for each hand clap. Participants are to do the same. Good, easy way to get everyone doing the same activity with some motion and sound stimulation. (you can translate 'rain' and 'lightning' into other languages that the participants speak)
4. **Coconut** : Have all participants stand up, arms length away from walls, tables or other people. Write COCONUT on flipchart so all participants can see (good for when English is not their first language, explain in their language what coconut translates to). Trainer spells out each letter of the word with their body, instructs participants to follow. Body spell out coconut several times at varying speeds. Once participants get the idea and are getting into it, you can add some melody to the spelling of Coconut and when you complete the spelling do a shimmy in a circle repeating "coconut, coconut, coconut". Example: C-O-C-O-N-U-T, C-O-C-O-N-U-T, (shimmy) Coconut, coconut, coconut. It's kind of silly, but is always a hit.
5. **The shakeout** : in a circle, everyone shakes out their left arm, right arm, left leg then right leg, starting with 16 times for each limb, then repeats all four limbs with 8, 4, 2, and then 1. Count out loud for full effect – counting in other languages encouraged!
6. **Mirrors** : in pairs people mirror each other, then switch leaders.
7. **Yes Let's!** : walking around, trainers take turns calling out what they want people to do "Lets climb a tree" then everyone says "Yes let's!" and everyone pretends to climb a tree.
8. **Line-up!** : Ask the group to line themselves up in the order of their birthday (or height, for example) without speaking.
9. **Superheros**: Ask the group to stand up, write SUPERMAN on a piece of paper for everyone to see and ask them if they know who Superman is and what he does (in rural settings they might not know and it might take a bit of description on your part). He flies! Hold your arms out and fly like superman, have everyone imitate you. Do the same for: SPIDERMAN - he climbs!, NINJA - he runs! (run in place if space limited), HULK - flexes his muscles and growls!. Once you have gotten through the 4 superheroes call out the names in random order, repeating some at times, having participants act out the motions defined for each character. Can speed up the pace so that people really get moving!
10. **10 second portrait:** (music optional) Have each participant write their name at the top of a blank piece of paper (can be in a notebook) and then instruct everyone to stand up. You'll need a bit of space so that people can walk around freely. If you have music, start playing a popular song and instruct all participants to walk around in the open space, random directions, carrying their blank piece of paper and a pen/marker. When the music stops, they pair up with the person who is closest to them and they exchange pieces of paper. Instruct participants to look at their partner and in just 10 seconds (or less!) draw the person's eyes. When 10 seconds is up, have each person give the piece of paper back to the owner and start the music again for people to mingle again. Repeat this pattern, having participants pair up and exchange their pieces of paper to draw each other's nose, mouth, face outline/hair, ears, and body. The trick is really to limit the drawing to between 5-10 seconds and keep people moving. The result has never been anything short of hilarious (and some portraits actually quite accurate!) and we have always posted everyone's portrait on the wall for the rest of the training. Some participants insist on taking them home 😊
11. **Mingle Mingle Mingle:**
  - a. *Goal:* Getting people up and moving and acting silly / having fun. Can also be good for breaking down hierarchy levels between CHWs and COPs or other Senior Folks. Can also be useful for selecting two 'volunteers' to lead a role-play of a home visit or whatever you need for your app. In my experience this is pretty fun and people laugh.
  - b. *How to Play:* There is one 'caller' and everyone else is a participant. As the caller, first teach everyone to sing 'mingle mingle mingle' in a conga line cadence and dance all around 'mingling' and mixing up who they are near. This is the basis of the game. Once everyone can dance and sing mingle, teach them to form 3 shapes that make sense in the local context. I like house, moto, bananas. For a house, two members of the group touch hands like a high five above their heads to form a slanted roof like a grass hut. For moto, again two players the first player pantomimes driving a moto (hands on handlebars) and the second pantomimes riding on the back. For bananas, you need three (3!) players to form a bunch: they touch hands above their heads and curve their bodies to form a banana shape. Practice the

positions with the group. Now it's time to start. The caller dances around and sings "mingle mingle mingle". Everyone sings along and dances. In a surprise, call out one of the three shapes. "House!" the last house to form or, if there is an odd number of players, the last one out not in a house pair is eliminated. Keep dancing and shouting shapes until everyone is eliminated but the final pair.

- c. *Supplies needed:* None
- d. *Ideal Group Size:* 12-40
- e. *Duration:* About 10 minutes

**12. Hidden Ball:**

- a. *Goal:* Get people woken up, you can also morph this into a public health game w/r/t HIV by talking about stigma/testing and "never knowing when someone is HIV positive" by just looking at them (borrowed from GrassrootSoccer approach)
- b. *How to Play:* One person closes their eyes, the rest of the participants decide on one person to hold the ball behind their backs, everyone then stands together with their hands behind their backs and then the "guesser" turns around and tries to figure out who is holding the ball
- c. *Supplies needed:* Ball/something to hide
- d. *Ideal Group Size:* 10-12, but you could do it with a larger groups and split into two teams
- e. *Duration:* As long as you would like to keep playing

**13. Heads and Toes Energizer (also known as Simon Says):**

- a. *Goal:* Getting people standing up and energized after coffee break or lunch
- b. *How to Play:* Trainer acts as the "caller" and stands at the front of the room. The trainer will make gestures and the training class follows along. The trainer shows off the gestures, hands on head, hands over mouth, hands on shoulder, hands on elbows, hands on hips, hands on knees, hands on toes. Once everyone has learned the gestures, pick up the pace. Do gestures from top to bottom, and mix it up to keep people guessing. Before it is over, run through the motions, EXTRA fast, make sure to do a few hands on hips, hands on knees, hands on toes. The goal being that everyone should laugh by the end of the session.
- c. *Supplies needed:* None
- d. *Ideal Group Size:* Unlimited
- e. *Duration:* About 5 minutes

## Splitting into groups

- 1. **Dancing** - Turn on some music, and dance with each person and drop them in a "random" seat. The great thing about this is that you can make it not random, and dance people to partners that pair stronger users with weaker users etc.
- 2. **Animals** - Write down pairs of animals and have everyone choose from a hat/bowl. No one is aloud to talk, and they must find the person who has the same animal as they by acting like their animal and making animal noises

## Calming Down and Coming Back Together

**1. Clap and Stop:**

- a. *Goal:* Get the group to stop talking and pay attention / be quiet.
- b. *How to Play:* At the start of the training explain that any time you start to clap loudly, everyone who hears the clapping should start clapping and look at you. Practice this once. If you need to get the group's attention, you start to clap and clap until every joins in. Then you all stop together with a big arm gesture (extend arms wide like a symphony conductor). Once there is silence you can resume the training.
- c. *Supplies needed:* None
- d. *Ideal Group Size:* Any
- e. *Duration:* 30 seconds

## Recap/Wind down activities!

End of the day activities to review material and close out the day in prep for the next day or project steps.

- 1. **Smiley Faces** : Trainer explains the aim of this activity and gives participants blank post it cards. S/He draws three "Smiley" faces on the flipchart: one smiling, one crying, one neutral. S/He asks participants to draw one of these faces on the post it card according to how they feel at the moment. Participants should stick their faces on the flipchart below the same face. We will see how the group feels and discuss.
- 2. **"The Network" Activity** : Bring a ball of yarn for this nice closing activity. Get into a circle. One person starts with one end of the yarn and passes it to someone else in the circle after telling the group their commitment to work after the training. Afterwards, everyone takes a piece of the yarn to tie onto their wrist as a bracelet.
- 3. **Reflect:** Participants can work alone or in pairs/trios to reflect on the following questions, and then return to the large group to share answers to example questions: What was particularly useful today/yesterday? Why? What is unclear from today/yesterday? (for next day recaps) Having "slept" on it all, what new insights do they have about yesterday's work?
- 4. **Partner Quiz:**  
A good 30 minutes (or more) before the end of the day, participants are paired with someone they have not worked with so far. With their learning materials in hand, the pairs take turns creating quiz questions for each other on the day's work. The "quizzer" affirms his/her partner's response and adds to it or clarifies something. Then, the other person creates and poses a question. After sufficient time, the facilitator can pull the group together and field one question from each pair that they would like to explore further. This is a great way for a facilitator to assess learning as it happens and to see where the participants want more explanation, guidance, or practice.

5. **Team Debate:** The facilitator divides the group into two equal sized teams (mixing fields of work as much as possible). Using a set of provocative statements related to the day's content, the facilitator writes the statement on a chart and poses it to one team. This team then has to decide what position to take on the statement and quickly come up with an argument to defend their position and present it to the other team. The team is awarded points on a scale of one to four, with four being an excellent defense of their position. Then it is the other team's turn with a new statement. The team with the most points in the end wins.
6. **What I Got from Today:** The facilitator draws a large quadrant on a chart with the following four words: Know, Challenge, Change, and Feel. Each participant is asked to do the same on a regular sized sheet and fill in the quadrants by responding to these four (or similar versions of these four) questions:

- Know: What was studied today that confirmed something you already knew?
- Challenge: What challenged you today?
- Change: What is one way you plan to change your work, based on today's learning?
- Feel: How do you feel about what you learned here?

The participants discuss their answers in small groups while the facilitator wanders around to collect the sheets (which are anonymous) to review