

**CONNECT, INSPIRE & COLLABORATE**

**YES!**



**ACTIVITIES  
FACILITATION MANUAL  
FOR YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS**

# YES!

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TO PRESERVE OUR FUTURE



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## DEAR FRIEND—

When YES! was founded in the spring of 1990, we didn't know that it would reach hundreds of thousands of people with a call to action for a better world, or play a part in mobilizing our generation for positive change. What was known was that our people and our planet were in a crisis, that many youth were losing hope, and that we had to do what we could to turn things around.

YES! was born out of a prayer. A prayer to be of service in a world enshrouded in pain. A prayer to help young people see their power and believe in themselves. A prayer that somehow, in some way, YES! might be part of the great work that is so needed in these troubled times.

In our first 20 years, YES! spoke in person to more than 650,000 students in schools nationwide. We facilitated hundreds of day-long youth empowerment workshops. And we organized and facilitated 100+ week-long gatherings in seven countries, reaching young people from 65+ nations. The response to our work was outstanding, and nowhere did we see our impact so profoundly illustrated as in our camps and Jams. Hundreds of letters poured in, telling us that the programs we offered were making a difference in young people's lives.

The single most important thing YES! events offer is perhaps also the simplest. Respect. A safe environment for young people to talk about what really matters to them, and to know that they will be listened to and accepted. So many of us feel isolated, like we are the only ones who care about our world. At YES! events, we discover that we are, in fact, part of a powerful and growing global community of people who care, and who are dedicated to positive change.

We see how real change starts within each of us: by experiencing the powerful connections between personal and planetary health, between healing around our experiences with 'isms' (like racism, classism and sexism) and building a world of social justice, between how we relate one-on-one, and from our diverse cultural and national identities. Because it's all connected. And every step we take in our own lives affects the lives of everyone else

Our work is constantly evolving. For many years, YES!'s core focus was on empowering young people to work for a healthier environment. More recently, however, we have embraced a broader definition of the environment, as we recognize the connections between social justice, peace, human dignity and environmental sanity. This manual is, in a certain sense, representative of our whole evolution, including exercises from our 20 years of work. Some of these haven't been used at YES! events for years, but they may be of use to your event, and thus they are included. Many will work in certain contexts or age groups, but not in others. Know your community, and use your own best judgment.

Every time we use them, we see how the exercises in this manual can be a portal towards changing lives. It is not just the activity, but also the energy with which it is facilitated and the openness that is held throughout the process. Listening deeply, creating space, going with the flow, letting go of expectations, and just being real, can enable each activity to go a lot further than what is here on paper.

We offer these exercises to you with hope that you will use them as they have been intended. With respect. With care. With reverence for all life. Honor the people you work with and the service to which this work, if it is to be truly effective, must be dedicated. Some of the exercises contained in this manual are not intended for any but a truly experienced facilitator. Some are much easier and safer to lead. All have the capacity to bring more connection, community, compassion, power, consciousness, and joy to our world.

Yours for healthy people and a healthy planet,



Ocean Robbins, Founder & Co-Director



Shilpa Jain, YES! Facilitator & Partner

PS — This manual was produced by YES!'s trained facilitators for their use. We hope it will be of value to others as well, but take no responsibility for the results of using these exercises without prior coaching from YES! This manual is in constant revision, and we welcome your feedback and ideas. If you are interested in hiring trained YES! facilitators, please contact us.

## A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

YES!'s work has evolved over many years. Our gratitude is due, first and foremost, to our event participants. They have never ceased to inspire us, challenge us, or fill us with hope for the future. YES! events would be meaningless without the thousands of extraordinary people who have graced our lives and used our work as a springboard from which to deepen their roots and spread their wings. This manual is dedicated to YES! Camp and Jam alumni, who span every inhabited continent and whose spirit is an essential part of every word in this book.

We want to thank Tad Hargrave, Coumba Toure, Malika Sanders, Laura Loescher, Evon Peter, Kiritapu Allan, Kalindi Attar, Tiffany Brown, Ryan Eliason, Michele Robbins, Malaika Edwards, Brahm Ahmadi, Sol Solomon, Jamie Schweser, Naomi Swinton, and all of the other partners and facilitators through the years who have contributed to the living body of work that is represented in these pages. Thank you to Lorin Troderman, Nga Trinh-Halperin, Romy Narayan, Julie Pennington, and all of the other YES! staff — past and present — who have provided a solid foundation for this work to emerge.

Thank you to John and Deo Robbins, Lillie Allen, Bliss Browne, Rich and Yvonne Dutra-St. John, Munir Fasheh, Marshall Ganz, Manish Jain, Joanna Macy, Wasif Rizvi, Lynne Twist, and all of the other mentors and elders whose life and work have enriched, inspired, nurtured and guided our work.

Thank you to all of the thousands of donors and supporters who have given of their time, their talents, and their dollars in service to our shared work. They have shown us the power of generosity, and their honesty and friendship have taught us so much about the spirit of real partnership. We are forever blessed.

A huge debt of gratitude is also due to all of the people and organizations that have pioneered so many of the exercises contained in this manual, and that have collaborated with us over the years. The activities herein come from a broad range of sources, including our original work, as well as countless organizations and people working with groups nationwide. It would be impossible for us to attribute accurately the source of many of the wonderful activities we are blessed to be able to use, compile, and share. But some we know. We want to thank 21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, Alli Starr and Art & Revolution Convergence, Anytown USA, Bolder Giving, Brotherhood/Sisterhood USA, Cascadia Quest, Challenge Associates, Creating Our Future, the Earthstewards Network, the Gaia Education Outreach Institute, Global Exchange, Paul Kivel and TODOS Institute, the Oakland Men's Project, Open Space Institute, Outward Bound, Resource Generation and Making Money Make Change, Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos, John Seed, Shikshantar, U Can Dance African Healing Arts and World Café. We want to thank all of the people and organizations around the world who are seeking to build community, spread awareness, and help people of all ages to take positive action for a healthy and just future.

A huge THANK YOU to Jazzmen Lee-Johnson for her incredible work and commitment in laying out and designing this book. She has helped transform it into a work of art.

Thank you to the ancestors — to all who have lived, breathed, dreamed, and died that we might have the opportunities we do today. And thank you to all future beings, whose infinite trust is now placed in our care and who call us, from some deep and eternal place, to build a world that is worthy of their dreams.

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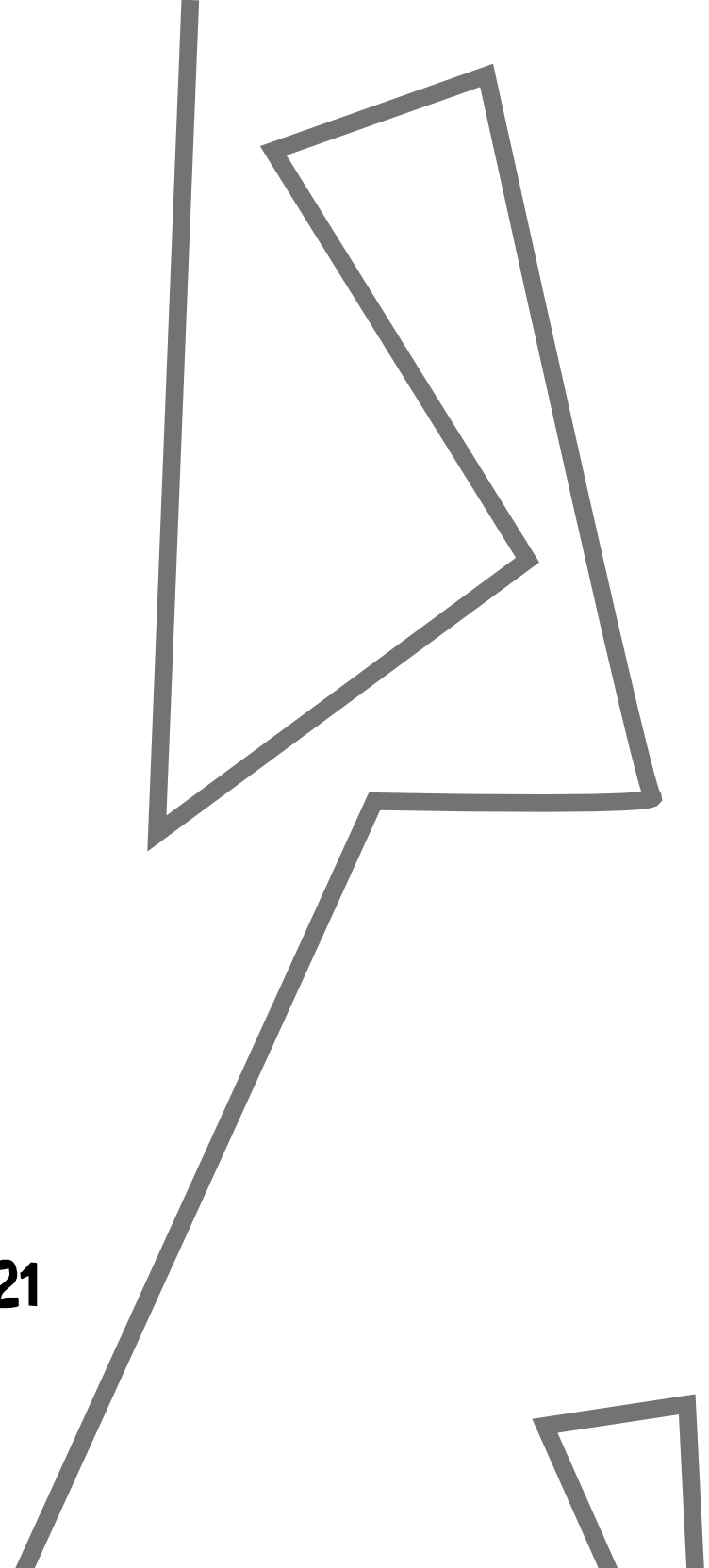
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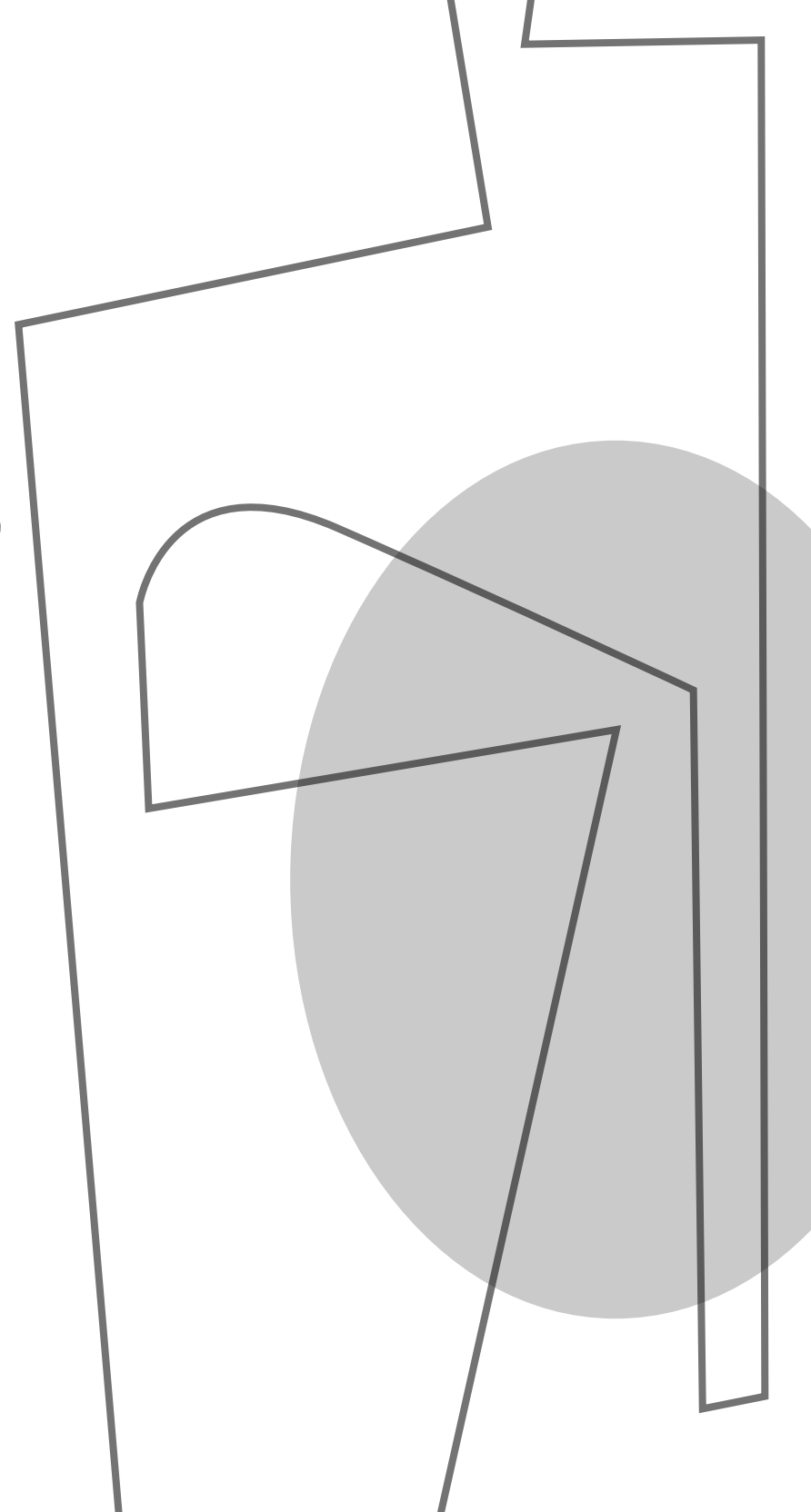
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# SETTING CONTEXT

EVERY HOME NEEDS A STRONG FOUNDATION IF IT'S GOING TO LAST. SO DOES EVERY GATHERING. HERE ARE SOME KEY PIECES TO BEGINNING AN EVENT, SO THAT YOU CAN WELCOME EVERYONE WITH CLARITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, CONNECTION, AND GOOD FEELING. MAKE A SOLID START.



# 1. WHAT IS A JAM?

by Shilpa Jain and Tad Hargrave

To understand a jam, maybe it's important first to know what it's not. A Jam is not a week of intellectual rhetoric and debate. It is not a meeting, conference or seminar, or a time to be spoken at through panels and plenary sessions. It's not really about information (though that may be present) or about being primarily in the mind/head space (though, that can be there too). It's definitely not a franchise to be spread around the world (no McJams!), and not THE heart of the global youth movement (we hope that there are many hearts, heads and hands). Nor is it about abstract, internet-based networking. For the folks organizing and facilitating Jams, it's also not about making money, advancing careers, or traveling around the world as 'youth ambassadors'.

A Jam is a chance for young change-makers to share their experiences, ideas, questions, hopes and struggles; to learn and unlearn from each other; and to build relationships that matter to them. It looks different in different contexts, but there are few common aspects.

First, a Jam seeks out and tries to manifest vibrant diversity, both in terms of participants and facilitators, and in terms of processes and issues explored. Moreover, in the course of a week, a Jam attempts to build bridges across diversity. It offers glimpses into a world which can include everyone, wherever they are at in their journeys. The emphasis is on what and who is present, rather than on a pre-set agenda. Process comes first, only then can there be real outcomes. All efforts are geared towards dialogue, friendship and understanding, rather than towards being right or winning arguments. The personal and interpersonal elements are given ample space and time. All of this means that processes are often 'slowed up', that people are invited to speak from their hearts, and that they are invited to listen for understanding (not necessarily agreement or disagreement) and to be present to the space and energy of the community.

Those who participate in a Jam usually come hoping to find their next growing edge. With Leveraging Privilege for Social Change, they are often pushing the envelopes around power and privilege and their relationships to these issues. With World Jams, they are trying to connect the dots of various movements and issues, hoping to attain greater clarity and engagement in their work, while living more full and balanced lives.

To put it simply, a Jam embodies two core principles: uncompromised truth and unconditional love. A Jam is, above all, a place to be real, to take off masks, to speak one's truth, and to be fully oneself. Simultaneously, a Jam is a highly appreciative space, where compliments and love are given freely and received with dignity and gratitude, and where the intention is towards healing, learning and growing honest, healthy relationships.

## Some key ingredients of a Jam:

1. Safe, supportive and beautiful physical environment.
2. Solid logistics (for food, accommodation, transportation, etc.).
3. Carefully selected participants, on the grounds of their commitment to internal, interpersonal and systemic change, and whatever other criteria the organizers/facilitators have set.
4. Capable facilitators (more on this in the document, “Qualities of Jam Facilitators”).
5. A trusting relationship and good teamwork/ team balance among the facilitators.
6. Relevant and provocative content and processes.
7. A few carefully selected guest presenters/elders based on the criteria the organizers and facilitators have set.

It is also very important to notice that Jams are highly specific kinds of events. We do not suggest that they are the only or best kind of work to happen in the world of social change. A Jam is simply a process, with its own particular idiosyncrasies that have been developed and chosen. It is important to name these specifics.

For example, we have decided that 30 people (inclusive of organizers, facilitators and participants) is the ideal number to have at a Jam. We focus particularly on people who:

- are engaged in their own work in their own community;
- are accountable to a place and rooted in something real and concrete (not abstract ideas or theories or networks);
- are willing and eager to have their perspectives, worldviews and practices challenged;
- are aligned with the above-mentioned Jam principles and values.

There are also certain conventions which further limit who comes to a Jam. For example, in YES-organized Jams, participants need to know English (for LPSC-USA and for the World Jam) or money needs to be available for good translation services. Most participants have access to computers/technology, in order to find out about the Jam. Participants need to have passport/visa capacities and a somewhat secure financial capacity to travel outside of the country. And usually, participants will have had to somehow come into contact with current or former Jam facilitators or participants and receive recommendations for participation. All of this is to say, that, as it stands, Jams have been and are highly selective.

We recognize that Jams can feel exclusionary or elitist, and this is an area of concern and ongoing inquiry. It is our intention to recognize that Jam participants are not inherently better or worse, more accomplished or less, than anyone else. They are just a particular mix of people that helps this particular program to work. Everyone, of every age, region, ethnicity, area of focus, background, relationship to privilege, and depth of activism experience, has unique gifts to give to this world. Everyone deserves a loving, safe and supportive environment to help them grow and thrive. Jams focus on a small and intentional cross-section of people, in the hopes that this work can be of service to the creation of more transformational gatherings and supportive communities for all people everywhere.

## 2. QUALITIES OF JAM FACILITATORS

by Shilpa Jain and Tad Hargrave

How to decide who will make a good facilitator for a Jam? It's a challenging and exciting task for several reasons. First, because we recognize that each person has their own unique flavor and brings their own special energy. Some are more apt at cooperative games, others with the arts, still others with systemic analysis, etc. Second, because we know that each person also comes with their own particular set of questions, their own particular history and background, their own particular struggles and strengths. Yet, even with this diversity, we have seen that some common qualities are shared among skilled Jam facilitators. By reflecting on the facilitators that have helped to nurture World Jams, Leveraging Privilege for Social Change Jams, and a variety of other Jams along the way, we suggest that what makes a person a Jam facilitator is that she or he:

Has an open heart, mind and spirit and is able to listen without judgment. And, therefore is able to build trust and hold space for the diversity of people gathered.

Has everyone's back. Doesn't take sides or divide/sort/rank people in the group. Committed to being present for all participants (even in difficult circumstances). Makes sure that people's voices get heard and that their needs get met.

Is able to communicate boundaries, concerns, limits, without shaming people. Is able to lift up unhealthy group dynamics or interpersonal interactions in a way that sheds light on them. Is not afraid of conflict and helps to support the group to focus on healing and connecting.

Is able to read group dynamics. Can feel where the group is at and what might be emerging, and can therefore sense what is a good next step.

Can support and lead without controlling the outcomes of the space. Has a good sense of different dialogue processes and tools and can work in a team to come up with new processes and activities as needed on the spot.

Is in touch with their own emotional/spiritual/intellectual process and can choose how and when to share that process. Can stay centered, grounded and facilitate even in the midst of strong emotions.

Has a belief in the necessity of authenticity, and is committed to creating an environment that combines unconditional love and uncompromised truth.

Is willing to put themselves out there and consistently speaks from their own experience. Can take risks in front of the group.

Is genuinely seeking to make the Jam a space of personal growth. Asks tough questions of themselves and therefore nurtures the space for others to ask tough questions too. Makes their own learning process transparent and part of the conversation, and in a way, serves as one of the group's reference point. Is a source of energy, integration and motivation to the group to participate, learn and share.

Can move through a variety of roles fairly fluidly: between facilitator, participant, peer, friend, co-learner (sometimes also parent, partner, etc.).

Has a clear understanding of how power works in groups, movements and institutions.

Is a person of tremendous integrity. Is invested in growing themselves. Feels responsible to and invested in a community of peers.

Has attended a Jam (or similar events) before. Understands the space she/he is trying to create, and is attuned to the dynamic balance of internal, interpersonal, and systemic issues.

All of the above is foremost in figuring out who could be a facilitator for the Jam. But, to be transparent, there is also a 'business side' to the Jam. This means that we also want a group of facilitators who are representative of the constituency we hope to gather for the Jam itself. Therefore, in putting together a facilitation team, organizers also consider:

gender balance: an even-ish number of women and men;

geographic distribution: coming from different parts of the participants' geography – around the US for LPSC, around the world for a World Jam;

age balance: some younger, some older, roughly between 18-35;

ethnic/racial balance;

areas of focus (i.e. social justice, sustainability, peace, locally-based work, global connections, philanthropy, policy, etc.);

diversity in terms of levels of physical ability and in sexual orientation.

In a World Jam, we seek to have a team of folks working on a range of different issues around social justice and also in varying levels of leadership. In Leveraging Privilege for Social Change, we seek to have a team of folks with a variety of different privileges (fame, monetary, networks, time, skills, position, access, etc.). At all Jams, we have found that another form of diversity is 'career stage', including some folks who are seasoned social change movement veterans, and others who are also deeply committed but may be somewhat newer to many of the conversations and issues.

In the past, YES! has worked with the idea of a facilitation 'training'. Yet, it hasn't quite worked out, in part because there is something wrong with the idea that we can train people to be Jam facilitators. We have to first find people with some of the basic aptitudes — people who care to understand one other and are not afraid to grow. These qualities are nurtured through working in one's communities, listening, dialoguing and holding space. They really emerge from a daily practice.



### 3. FACILITATOR'S SELF-EXPLORATION

Time: 30 minutes

This exercise is geared towards facilitators evaluating themselves before or after an event. Have them share answers, in pairs (possibly switching partners for each of the three sets of questions). After pair and share time, the whole group of facilitators can be reconvened for discussion. These questions can also be answered in writing. Your organizing committee can also use these questions to interview potential facilitators for your event, in order to help you make a decision.

- 1) What do you feel are your greatest facilitation strengths? Describe an important moment when you felt them needed.
- 2) What is your growing edge as a facilitator? What are areas in which you still have more learning to do? Describe a time when you felt this “room for improvement” came to light.
- 3) In your interactions with your co-facilitator(s), what did you appreciate about yourself? How do you think you could have supported or befriended or worked with them better? What are some things you appreciate about them?

### 4. OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Time: 120 minutes

At the start of a gathering, we like to frame what we're up to. It is important to plan this opening really well, or it can drag on and leave participants feeling bored. It should be crisp and involve the voices of all the facilitators.

What might appear in your opening:

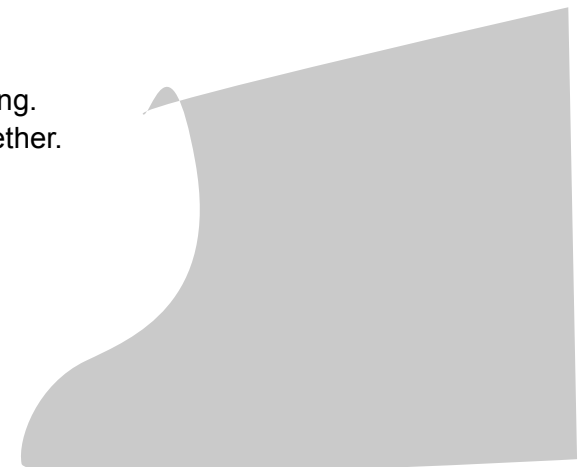
- **Your Vision and Purpose:** Internal, interpersonal and systemic transformation; connecting the dots between people, issues and movements; building connection and trust between diverse social change movement leaders; bringing to each day some time for the body, mind, emotions and spirit, and giving participants support and skills to help them be more healthy and effective in their lives and work.
- **Personal Introductions** and brief biographical sketches from the facilitators.
- **Group Agreements:** We typically have three agreements for a gathering. Confidentiality is the first agreement. We want to create safe space where people can be themselves, speak their minds, and not have to worry about where it might show up later. We honor each person's confidence and agree to not share things about them that could compromise them in any way. The second agreement is around no drugs or alcohol for the duration of the workshop. We want to approach each other with clear minds and hearts, and we do not know peoples' own individual histories with these substances or with substance abuse. So, we honor everyone by agreeing to not partake in these substances for the week. The third agreement is simply respect — for our host site, for each other, for our meeting time. This can be further elaborated, depending on the needs/requirements of your particular group, such as: cleaning up after yourselves, not keeping other people up late at night, not using cell phones, computers or ipods during sessions, not leaving the site without permission from the facilitators, not engaging in sexual activity, not breaking laws, not bring shoes into the meeting space, etc. Whichever of these agreements you make, make sure you take time to explain why and to answer any concerns or questions. Remember, they are not agreements, unless everyone agrees to them.

- **Site Rules:** Hazards, rules, housekeeping, safety and other issues specific to the site.
- **Themes and Highlights** of each day, and brief descriptions of the gathering's guest presenters.
- **Event-Long Activities:** Explain Secret Angels, Appreciation Posters, and/or Meal Crews (if applicable).
- **Site Host Announcements:** Allow time for the event hosts to make announcements or statements they need.
- **Meal Crews:** These will be teams of perhaps 4-6 people who will clean up after meals, on a rotating basis. For a gathering of 30, we find it good to have four meal crews, and so on any given day each of three crews has a meal, and one crew has the day off (or can be assigned to help gather participants on time for each session).

You can use the Barnyard game to convene the small groups. Then, when people have gathered into their respective meal crews, you can invite them to introduce themselves to each other while standing in a circle. Have them all raise their right hands in the air: "Repeat after me. I, <state name>, do hereby solemnly swear that I will arrive promptly for all meal clean-up and preparation times to which I am assigned. And what is more, should I not show up promptly and stay until the entire job is fully complete and there is nothing more for me to do, I give my crew full permission to use whatever means necessary to rectify the situation. In return, my team also gives me permission to do whatever it takes to ensure their reliability. This is both a promise and a very real threat... now hug your crew!"

Another option with meal crews is to give each group five minutes to come up with a new group name, and develop a group cheer, which they then perform for the other groups.

Here are the details for an opening session from a recent gathering. It may give you a sense of how to put all these different pieces together.




## **OPENING SESSION DETAIL FROM AN ACTUAL JAM**

**4 PM-6:25 PM**

- 15**     ***The Systems Game***
- 5**       ***Welcome/Attunement (welcome everyone, we're here in a context together, cell phones off, deep breath, no holding hands)***
- 5**       ***Introduction to the site***
- 15**     ***Name Tag Game***
- 30**     ***Go-around: name, age, geography, organizational affiliation / area of focus***
- 15**     ***Facilitation Team Intro: Why we're here and how we're connected to this work (2 minutes each)***
- 10**     ***Setting Intentions***
- 5**       ***Agreements (no illegal substance use, confidentiality, cell phones, respectful of people's needs for quiet)***
- 15**     **Logistics**
  - *Children as part of the community***
    - *Introduce the support team (childcare, cooks, YES! staff, site staff)***
    - *Internet, water conservation, poison ivy, fire safety, late noise spots, hot tub, sauna, pond, smoking area, ant problem, be conscious of cups, no food or drinks outside the eating and kitchen area***
- 5**       ***Any questions?***
- 10**     ***Site hosts to tell their story***
- 5**       ***Secret Angels and Appreciation Posters***
- 15**     ***Meal Teams – formation and explanation***
- 5**       ***Intro to food and meal blessing***

Here are some additional frames for your opening. These were developed in programs for participants in their late teens and early 20s, but you might find them useful in your event.



**This Event Is Experiential:** Encourage everyone to be actively involved.

**Take Responsibility:** We're going to give you 100% of everything we have. You get out of it what you put into it. No more, no less.

**Step out of Your Comfort Zone:** This camp will definitely invite you to do some things that you have never done before. But many of the rewards in life are outside of what is comfortable for us. Sometimes the sweetest fruits on the tree are out on a limb.

**Be Four Years Old:** When do many of us have the most fun in our lives? When we're four years old! An older person will come to a puddle and just walk around it, while a child may jump in and splash around. Bring out the curiosity, openness, freedom and attention that you had as a child. You'll enjoy the experience a whole lot more!

**Please, No Put Downs:** This is a place where demeaning people is not okay. Teasing is fine if it's in good humor, and the other person doesn't mind. But no actively putting others down. In a recent poll, it was found that in the United States, there are 20 put-downs for every positive thing people said to each other. But, how it feels to be put down? Sure, sometimes it's in good humor, but sometimes, even when you laugh, doesn't it hurt a bit? And over the course of time, when people are being put down and called names, don't they start to believe it just a little? So, for this camp, we're going to change that ratio! Let's have 20 put-UPS for every put down! I'm going to ask that if someone says something you feel hurt by, you say "Ouch." That is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. So if someone says "Ouch," I want to invite whoever is talking to pause for a moment and hear that your friend, someone in this circle, just felt hurt. It doesn't mean you were right or wrong, but it is an opportunity to get that feedback, and maybe to apologize or respond in some supportive way. Let's try it all together. "You're all a bunch of crummy weaklings!" (They should respond with "Ouch!") Good job!

**Be Yourself:** It's a danger if people start to believe that at this gathering, everyone needs to be happy and hug all the time! Peer pressure of any kind is no good. Be sure to clarify that you are valuable and respected no matter what. Don't try to fit in, but just be yourself, because then you WILL fit in.

**Time for Questions and Answers:** Invite any questions people might have, and do your best to answer them.

## 5. SETTING INTENTIONS

*When beginning a gathering, it's good for each person to have the opportunity to set their own intentions for the time. This allows people to gain clarity about what they hope to get out of the gathering. At the same time, each person is setting the intention, rather than making a demand, or putting an expectation on you or the other hosts/facilitators. This allows responsibility to be better distributed, and gives each person the chance to co-create the space to manifest their own and others' intentions.*

Pass out 2-3 notecards and a pen to each person. Ask them to reflect on their intentions for the gathering. They can complete the sentence, "I intend to.." You can let them know that it might include anything from having fun, to listening to others, to making new friends, to understanding an issue, and so on. Give everyone a few minutes to think about and write their intentions, one on each card.

If you have time, you can do a go-around in a circle, with each person sharing one intention, until all the intentions have been shared. We do this sharing, so that we can move from holding our intentions as an individual, to holding them collectively, as a community. You can then ask people to put their intentions up around the room (using tape, if needed), so that you can be surrounded by all of your intentions for your time together.

If you have less time, you can collect the notecards without reading them aloud. Before the start of the next session, you can then put them up around the room. Ask people to take the first ten minutes to look at them before sitting down for the session.

It's nice to re-visit the intentions at the end of the gathering, before a closing check-in. People can see if their intentions were met and gain a sense of completion to the process.

**Time: 10 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: pens, notecards, tape**

## 6. SECRET ANGELS

Before the gathering, write the name of each person in your community onto a slip of paper (include childcare, food and hosting/cleaning folks, if they are willing). Either when they register, or in your opening detail, have each person pick a name out of a hat. Make sure they don't pick themselves, and that they don't tell you or anyone else whose name they got. You can explain that they are the Secret Angel of the person whose name they drew.

Each person's Secret Angel will do nice things for her/him throughout the gathering, in secret. These might include having someone else give your special person a hug or shoulder massage, or a present or flower, or a nice note or picture, or asking for a song or dance to be performed at the outset of a session, or anything else conjured up through creativity and caring.

Encourage people to name their talents and skills to the group, as possible offerings for Secret Angels to call upon. This can be done as a brainstorm or a go-around in the opening session. Remind them to keep their secret for the whole week, especially from their special person. And, invite people to enjoy receiving and not worry too much about guessing who it is.

**Time: 10 minutes at beginning and 20 minutes at the end of gathering**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: slips of paper**

## 7. APPRECIATION POSTERS

During registration or in your opening session, have each participant creatively write her/his name on a large piece of paper. Post these along a wall a few feet off the ground, or have them available in a prominent and easily accessible location. Throughout the gathering, at any time, people can write nice notes of appreciation to each other. Encourage them to do so throughout the week, especially when they notice something beautiful about the person. People take their Appreciation Posters home with them at the end of the gathering as a keep-sake and reminder of the gifts people saw in them.

**Time:** During free time  
**Suggested Group Size:** any  
**Materials:** large pieces of paper, one for each participant, and colored pens

## 8. APPRECIATION CARDS

*This is a variation on Appreciation Posters. It is also done outside of group time. The only thing that needs to happen in the group is an explanation of the process.*

As each person arrives, they are given a stack of postcard-size pieces of paper with nothing on them except names. Each card has the name of a different participant (and also, potentially, staff member) at the event. These cards are used as a way to offer support, love, acknowledgement or appreciation to others at the event. The goal is to give them all away by the end of the gathering. Participants are invited to write a note, draw a picture, or create a poem to share their appreciation and love to one another. They can be signed, or not, and given either directly or secretly.

**Time:** 5 minutes  
**Suggested Group Size:** 10+  
**Materials:** index card-sized papers; each person receives a 'set' of cards, which has all the names of the group members.

## 9. MEAL BLESSINGS

At the end of the session, before each meal, form a circle, and then allow a brief time for 1-2 people to share feelings, reflections, gratitude, prayers, poems or songs with everyone else present. Affirm that all cultures and relationships to religion or spirituality are welcome.

We recommend holding the blessing BEFORE you leave the session for your meal, since people will already be gathered. Otherwise, everyone gets to the meal at different times, which makes holding a blessing more challenging.

Also, the first blessing sets a tone. By being deep, profound and sensitive, it can ensure space for all of the different spiritual beliefs in your community. For example, we had one international gathering in which a Pagan participant shared a song invoking the "Horned God". Some Christian participants took this to be an invocation of the devil. They began laughing. The Pagan participant felt offended, and we needed to open up a space in which she could share what the "Horned God" meant to her, and the Christians could share how it had sounded to them. Not everyone left celebrating the "Horned God," but we all learned that different symbols mean different things to different people, and it takes honest dialogue to move past hurtful assumptions to deepened understanding.

**Time:** 5 minutes/meal  
**Suggested Group Size:** any

## 10. SACRED CONNECTIONS

If you host your gathering in a beautiful natural setting, you may have the opportunity to interact with nature in a way that deepens your spiritual and human connection. For example, a wide mountain vista or a vast desert sky open up the sacred space within each of us and enable us to drop to a deeper level. This activity works best at night, when you have the moon, stars and the quiet holding you.

Lead the group to an open space, and ask them to each find a place to sit somewhere. They should be comfortable and not in a circle. They only need to be able to hear the voice of the facilitator, who should speak slowly, pausing for several seconds between sentences.

“I am going to invite you to really feel where you are now. You can close your eyes, or keep them open if it’s more comfortable for you. Feel the ground beneath you and the sky above you. Feel your body. Start with your toes... and now feet. Then move up to your ankles... (and so on, all the way up the body). Feel the top of your head and its connection with the vast sky above you. Drink the sky in with your eyes. Feel the dirt between your toes. Feel your connection to this earth, to these trees, to this sky...” The goal of the facilitator is create a contemplative and meditative space. They should only say what they feel will help accomplish that. Hold this space for several minutes.

“Now, I am going to invite you, to rise, one-by-one, and form a circle. As you sit down, bring forward an offering. This should be a special quality of yours. For example, you can say, ‘I offer my sense of humor,’ or ‘I offer my kindness.’ It can be anything special part of you that you want to bring to this community this week. Let us make sure we give at least few seconds between people, so we can fully receive their offering.” This part takes about 15 minutes, and the facilitator can say, “Thank you” after each offering is given.

When everyone has formed a circle, you can close the sacred time by asking people to share a fragment of a love song, in any language. This can be done in a go-around. Just the song, no explanations or discussions. “We are bringing in the music of our love, which we will carry with us for the week.”

When all have completed, hold the silence for a few moments longer, and then thank everyone and wish them a good night.

You can return to this space on the last night of your gathering. Revisit the connections to nature and re-enter the meditative space. Then, you can ask people to share what they are receiving/taking away from the community, back to their own homes.

**Time: 45 minutes**

**Suggested Group  
Size: any**

# BUILDING COMMUNITY

NOW THAT WE'VE SET THE STAGE, IT'S TIME TO KNOW WHO IS HERE AND HOW WE ALL FIT TOGETHER. WE BELIEVE THAT MOVEMENTS ARE BUILT BY FRIENDSHIPS AND COMMUNITY. THIS NEXT SET OF TOOLS WILL HELP IN DEVELOPING CONNECTIONS AMONG PEOPLE, SO THAT THEY FEEL THEMSELVES AS A PART OF A WHOLE. EACH VOICE IS HEARD; EACH PERSON IS WELCOMED FOR WHO THEY ARE. WEAVING TOGETHER THESE THREADS CREATES A STRONG FABRIC THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE TRIALS TO COME.



# 11. CHECK-IN

*This is a great activity for the beginning and ending of a gathering. Introduce or re-introduce the concept of safe space. Don't be afraid to let this go deep. Encourage people to share what's real for them, and let people know that creating safe space takes a group that gives its undivided loving attention, and a speaker who is willing to 'take off the mask' and share what is real for them.*

Participants go around in a circle, each having a turn to share. If you have a small group or abundant time, you can leave the time open-ended, but if there are more than 15 people you may want to suggest a time for each sharing (for example, four minutes per person). We often pass a watch. The person seated next to the speaker can keep time, touching the speaker's knee when they have 30 seconds left, their shoulder when time is up, and giving them a hug if they keep going more than 30 seconds over. If there are more than 15 people in the circle, it can be good to take a stretch break every 8-10 people.

You can invite people to re-state their name, ages, hometowns and organizations before they dive into their sharing. Possible guiding questions include:



What's something you love about this planet, and what have you experienced or learned recently that has touched into your pain for our world?

What are your fears and hopes for this week?

Where are you struggling, and where are you growing, in your life right now?

What is a threshold you are currently on?

What has been a defining pain or struggle in your life journey, and how has your response to it helped you to grow in wisdom, faith or compassion?

What's your work in the world, what's up in your life, and what questions are you grappling with?

What is something you want to share with this community, that may be important for us to know about you?

There are also other kinds of check-ins, if you are short on time, or to intersperse throughout the gathering to get a pulse on the group. For example, you can have a 1-word or 3-word check-in, where people use that number of words to describe how they are feeling right now. You can also do a movement check-in, where each person does a movement and utters a sound to express how they are feeling.

**Time: Depends on group size**

**Suggested Group Size: 2-35**

## 12. CHECK-IN GROUPS

(recommended when a whole group check-in will take too long, so perhaps for groups of 35+)

Smaller groups can meet each night to share and reflect on the day. They should each have one facilitator. Check-in groups can go-around with open space for anyone to share. They can also have a theme, which can be explained and also written up on a large sheet of paper. Suggested themes include:



What is your family like? What is your background? Your community?

What are your greatest hopes and fears for the week?

What did you learn today and how does it affect you?

How do you think the world will change in your lifetime? What will it take to turn things around?

What are the scariest and most exciting things facing you in the next few months?

Describe a time when you experienced a miracle.

What brought you here?

How are you going to apply what you've learned here in your life?

What lies at your crossroads right now?

What are your roots?

I am a person who ... (reflect on how you see yourself).

You are a person who ... (others reflect on how they see you).

What color are you right now? Why?

**Time: 30 minutes,  
every night**

**Suggested Group  
Size: groups of 6-8**

# 13. COMMON GROUND

**Time: 20-30 minutes**

*When the group has been separated into pairs or small groups, and people have had the chance to share some of their individual stories, it can be good to bring the group back together to find some common ground. This activity enables people to reconnect and see how they are similar to each other. It also allows for a variety of sharing, to bring out things that haven't had a chance to come up yet.*

**Suggested Group  
Size: any**

All the participants stand in a circle. Anyone may begin by stepping into the circle and stating something that is both true for them, and that they want to share with the group. For example, "I am very close to my family", or "I struggle with some of my co-workers". It can be anything really. It only needs to be true, come in the form of an "I" statement, and be something the person wants to bring into the space. After stepping into the circle with a statement, the person waits for a few seconds. Anyone else who feels that the statement is also true for them, then also steps in. The inner circle holds for few seconds, as everyone looks around the circle and acknowledges who is there. Then everyone steps back to the whole circle, and another person takes a turn.

Common Ground gets even more interesting, when people build on each other and try to include nuances in the conversation. For example, someone might say, "I am very religious," the next person might say, "I am spiritual but I don't believe in any religion," and the next person might say, "I am spiritual and comfortable with all religions," etc. It does not need to follow a particular theme, but sometimes does, which can be rich and exciting. Facilitators can model what is possible through their own sharing.

Occasionally, someone may find themselves as the only person in the circle. Sometimes, we are the only ones with our experience, and our diversity is beautiful too. Facilitators can let people know before the activity begins that there are no right or wrong statements, only what is true for you. We are creating an atmosphere of safety, where people can be themselves and share themselves openly and honestly. Encourage people to take risks and be vulnerable. They may be surprised at what they have in common with a group of strangers.

Common Ground can go on for as long as needed – just check the energy of the group. Bring it to a close by asking for two or three last comments.

## 14. LISTENING EXERCISE

*This activity emphasizes the importance of listening, which is incredibly important in your gathering. It also gives people the opportunity to evaluate themselves as a listener.*

Have the group divide into pairs. Ask one person to be designated as person A; the other as person B. A will have about three minutes to share a story with B. It could be the story of their first kiss, the story of their birth -- any concrete story with a beginning, middle and end. B will listen as A is talking; they will not talk, ask questions, comment, but only listen. When A is finished, B will tell A's story back to him/her, as though it is their story. That is, they will speak in the "I". For example, "I went to the game, and I met my friend there..."

When B has finished re-telling A's story, then A has the opportunity to give feedback on how it felt to have their story re-told to them. They may also make observations about B's listening skills, whether they felt heard, or they felt assumptions were made, or whatever else.

When the whole process is complete, then the partners switch. Now, it is B's chance to tell their own story to A, and for Person A to listen closely. When B has completed, then A will re-tell their story in the "I". Lastly, B has a chance to comment on the experience of hearing their story retold and on A's listening skills.

Typically, the facilitator explains one part of the exercise at a time, so as not to confuse people. The facilitator should also let them know upfront that it is a listening exercise, so that they practice listening and can then learn more about themselves and each other as listeners.

The whole exercise takes about 20 minutes total (three minutes for A to tell; three minutes for B to re-tell; four minutes for conversation on the experience; and then three minutes for B to tell; three minutes for A to re-tell; four minutes for conversation on the experience). However, you may also want to reconvene the whole group for a short conversation on what they learned about themselves as listeners and any other insights they had from the exercise.

**Time: 20-30 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

## 15. COMMUNITY LABOR

*Oftentimes, the site of your gathering provides an opportunity for the group to do a small service or labor project. It is a way of contributing back to the community that has hosted and held them for their days together. It also brings together the body with the mind, hands with the heart, thereby re-affirming the dignity of labor. In addition, it can be a creative group expression, which enables different peoples' strengths to shine in another setting and allows the group to feel even more bonded together.*

Important things to remember for your labor project:

- 1) Make sure it's something that the host site and/or community needs. It should come out of their guidance or direction.
- 2) Ask ahead of time to see what might be a way to contribute back, and let them know your time constraints (if any). Plan ahead, so that you can be sure to find the right activity that fits your gathering.
- 3) Frame the activity as an opportunity to give back and take care. Leaving a site even better than you found it is a great gift for future groups, including yours.
- 4) Try to pick an activity that can include everyone in different capacities. Not everyone may be up for 'hard' labor, so have a variety of tasks so that people can be involved in ways that are comfortable for their physique and health. At many gatherings, we try to make sure there is a daily opportunity for labor/service, usually in the form of cleaning or doing dishes, which can be done in small groups, each taking turns for a particular meal or space.

**Time: 2-3 hours**

**Suggested Group Size: any number**

**Materials: whatever might be needed for the project**

## 16. TWO MINUTE INTRODUCTIONS

*This is a great exercise to use early on in a gathering. The first morning or afternoon are perfect for it.*

People pair up with someone they don't know well and have ten minutes to learn as much as possible about each other, focusing particularly on one another's gifts, talents, skills and unique qualities. Note-taking is advised and encouraged. Then, they have 5 minutes on their own to prepare a commercial that will tell the world how great their partner is. Finally, each person makes a two minute presentation to the group, sharing what s/he has learned about her/his partner's life, dreams, struggles, and gifts.

**Time: 20 minutes +  
2 minutes/person**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 6-50**

## 17. SELF INTRODUCTIONS

*This exercise is designed for activists and people actively engaged in social change work. It gives participants the opportunity to learn more about each other's lives and work. Each person receives input on a specific problem or challenge they're dealing with. And, it facilitates connections through the rest of the week, because it lets them know who is there.*

The whole group is given ten minutes of quiet time. Each person must think about what they want to share about themselves and draft a presentation outline that focuses on:

- 1 — THE PAST: Why do you do this work? What brought you to it?
- 2 — THE PRESENT: What projects are you currently engaged in?
- 3 — THE FUTURE: What are your goals and visions for the future?

When everyone is ready, convert the room into a theater, with a 'stage' and an 'audience'. Each participant is then given five minutes in front of the group to present themselves. Time is strictly kept; people are given a signal at two minutes and 30 seconds. If they go over time, they are hugged off stage. After each presentation, there's a huge standing ovation. Practice this before you begin the presentations.

Every time we do this, we hear, either before or after, "That wasn't enough time!" Of course, it's not enough to share your life story. But it's exactly the right amount of time to give each other an introduction to who we are. You have the whole gathering to find out more details. This is just a chance to learn who's in the room and who you might want to connect with more. Also, every time we do this, people also say (after they are done), "Oh! I forgot to say the most important thing!" So, knowing that, please take your ten minutes of preparation seriously. You have exactly the right amount of time to share what is most important to you.

**Time: Most likely  
2-3 hours**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 10-35**

**Materials: paper  
and pens for  
preparation, a  
watch or clock for  
timing**

## 18. SHOULDER MASSAGE

Form a circle standing up. Have each person turn to his/her right. Have each person take a step (or more if appropriate) inwards. Either leave everyone standing, or have everyone sit down. Have each person put his/her hands on the shoulders of the person in front. Have them massage those shoulders (and backs, necks and heads). After a few minutes, everyone turns around and the shoulder massages go in the other direction.

At the beginning, people may feel a little nervous about 'touching' another human being. So, you want to help them to feel certain and one of the best ways to do that is to give them a structure within which they can operate. If you tell them exactly what to do, and if everyone else is doing it, then no one is afraid that they will be wrong or inappropriate. Directions help them focus on having fun, and not on "Am I doing it right?"

Here's some types of massage to lead them in: Shoulder, Neck Rub, Scalp Rub, Back Pat with Open hand, Gentle Back Thump with Closed Fists, the Back Scratcher, the Back Chopper, the Back Squeezer, the Upper Arms Squeezer and finally the MESS UP THEIR HAIR!

**Time: 5-10 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 12+**

## 19. ALTAR CEREMONY – CREATING OUR CENTER

*This activity enables people to get to know each other at a deeper level and share their spiritual roots and what matters most to them. It lets the group co-create a common sense of the sacred, and gives people a chance to feel heard in their uniqueness.*

"We want to create a sacred center to our circle, where we each bring an object that carries personal, sometimes spiritual, meaning and significance. Sharing these objects can help us to create a common core in our community."

One person at a time comes forward and brings their object to the altar. They share the significance and meaning of the object in their lives. Everyone else simply listens. When the person is complete, they may say something all together, such as "Thank you."

After everyone is done, ask the group: "What would you call this? 'Altar' works for some, but what are other terms that fit for you? Perhaps we can call it our 'center', but it's important to discuss what that means to each of us." (Give time for answers.)

The facilitator should let the group know that all faiths, life paths and spiritual beliefs are welcome here. S/he should also let them know that the center isn't here to restrict anyone or be offensive. It's just here to remind us of our individual and collective intentions and that we are all connected.

**Time: 20 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 4+**

**Materials: a box or table covered with a beautiful cloth that marks where the altar will be built. Put something for each of the four elements, like a glass of water, an empty bowl, a rock or pine-cone, and a candle for fire.**

## 20. SPONTANEOUS STANDING OVATIONS

*A great way to shower people playfully with appreciation throughout the gathering while also getting people's bodies moving and energized.*

“Throughout this gathering, people will do and say things that will be absolutely brilliant. But I’m curious, how many of you have ever felt like people did not appreciate how amazing you are, or how incredible your ideas were? Well, that won’t happen here. If anyone says or does anything that you deem worthy of group recognition, then you must call out, ‘Spontaneous standing ovation for JOHN!’ and everyone must jump to their feet immediately and clap, whoop and cheer at the top of their lungs, while looking at John, for no more than five seconds, and then immediately sit down.”

Give them a few practice rounds. You can do this by having someone in the group say the wisest thing they have ever heard, like “Don’t eat yellow snow!”. As soon as they do that, wait for someone to call it, and then jump up and cheer for the bearer of wisdom. Practice this two or three times, getting louder and louder, until you are happy with their level of energy.

Participants can also call for spontaneous standing ovations for themselves. This is a great way to build self-worth and confidence, while energizing the group and having people practice receiving love. “In life, we have to learn not only to give, but also to receive. If we don’t learn to receive, we become martyrs and rob people of the opportunity to contribute to us. A lot of people don’t even think they are worthy of receiving love. We want to transform that pattern here. One way we can do that is by appreciating ourselves, in front of the group, for things we did that we are darned proud of, but that others might not have noticed.”

**Time: 5 min.  
explanation, 30  
seconds (each  
time)**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 10+**

# TEAM-BUILDING GAMES & ENERGIZERS

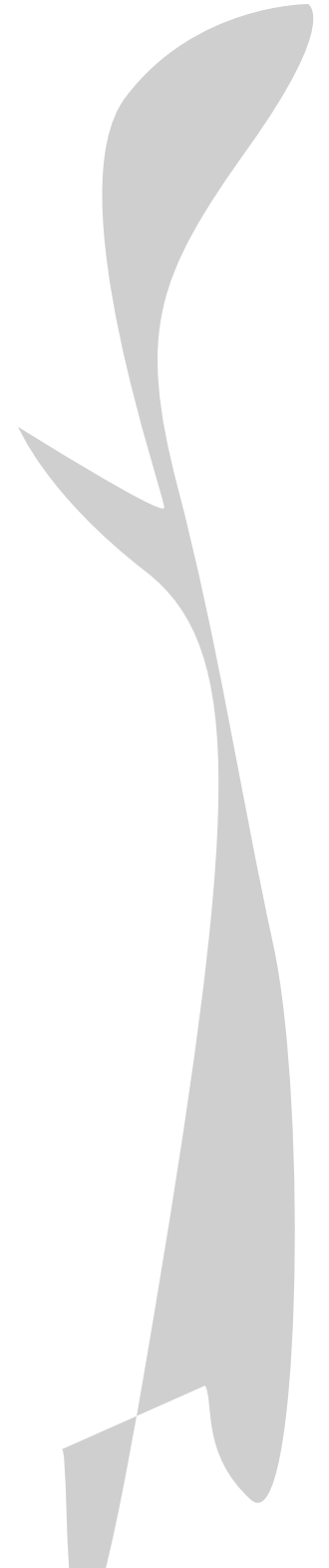
THEY ARE PERFECT FOR ANY TIME OF DAY, COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES AND ARE A SURE WAY TO REVIVE AND REVITALIZE A GROUP. NO, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT JELLY BEANS! BUT LIKE ANY GOOD RUSH, GAMES AND ENERGIZERS KEEP THE BLOOD FLOWING, THE HEAD ALERT AND THE HEART OPEN.

HERE, YOU'LL FIND GAMES THAT CAN WORK IN ALL KINDS OF SITUATIONS, DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU NEED AT THE MOMENT. SOMETHING TO CURE THAT AFTERNOON LULL? SOMETHING TO HELP PEOPLE LEARN NAMES? SOMETHING FOR A GOOD LAUGH? SOMETHING TO BRING OUR BODIES BACK AFTER A LOT OF TALKING? YOU'LL FIND IT ALL AND MORE!

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM GAMES, EVEN IN AN INTERGENERATIONAL GROUP. YOU MAY BE SURPRISED HOW MUCH PEOPLE ENJOY PLAYING, AND THE AMAZING RIPPLE EFFECTS GAMES CAN HAVE.

BE SURE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT KIND OF GAME WILL FIT YOUR PURPOSE. IT'S HARD TO GO WRONG, BUT SOME GAMES WILL BE BETTER PLACED THAN OTHERS.

REMEMBER, THESE ARE ALL COOPERATIVE GAMES, WITHOUT WINNING OR LOSING, SO THAT WE CAN RENEW OUR COMMITMENTS TO CONNECTING, LEARNING AND LAUGHING TOGETHER!





## 21. BIG GROUP NAME

Everyone stands in a circle. The first person steps forward and says her/his name while making a movement that shows how s/he feels. It could be a wave, or a skip, or a movement that expresses jubilation, sadness, worry, excitement, or anything else. It shouldn't be a flip, or cartwheel, or anything else the group won't be able to do, because... Then everyone else in the circle steps forward and repeats the person's name and motion. Each person has a turn, going around the circle. You can also add a rhythm with claps and stomps, if you like, so that everyone moves to a beat together.

**Time: 30 seconds/  
person**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 20-100**

## 22. WELCOMING NAME GAME

Everyone stands in a circle. The first person steps forward and says her/his name LOUD and PROUD, and everyone else welcomes them. For example, Coumba would walk into the circle and say, "Hi, my name is COUMBA!" All the others will yell in unison, "WELCOME COUMBA!" with joy and enthusiasm.

**Time: 20 seconds/  
person**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 20-100**

## 23. NAME TAG

Have the group stand in a circle. Ask them to go around, saying their names loudly and clearly. Invite one person to the center. They are 'IT'. They stay in the center of the circle, and their goal is tag the person whose name is called. The participants in the circle are frozen in place; they cannot move or run. The way they escape being tagged is by saying the name of someone else in the circle. IT then tries to tag that person, who tries to say the name of another, before being touched. Whoever IT eventually tags becomes the new IT, while the old IT takes their place in the circle. The old IT then call the first name to start the next round of the game. If anyone flinches or moves to avoid being tagged, they automatically become IT. This game is often hilarious, as people try to say each other's names quickly and keep IT moving in circles. Facilitators may want to do an introductory round or two before starting the game.

**Time: 10-15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size:  
10-30**

## 24. SMALL GROUP NAME

Everyone sits in a circle. The first person says her/his name and the name of a fruit or vegetable that starts with the same letter. (For example: "Scott Squash.") Then the person to the left repeats the first person's name and fruit or vegetable and adds their own: ("Scott Squash, Karen Kiwi"). The next person repeats this and adds their own name and fruit or vegetable to the growing list: ("Scott Squash, Karen Kiwi, Ellen Eggplant"). This continues around the circle until everyone has had a turn. The last person will have to know everyone's name. At the end, you can invite people to try saying all the names around the circle.

**Time: 1 minute/  
person**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 8-20**

## 25. INCORPORATION

This game is about grouping and regrouping as fast as possible. The idea is for participants to meet as many people as they can. They carefully listen to the facilitator's instructions, and then run, organize and find their appropriate group. Every time they hear a whistle, or the lights are turned off, or a loud bell rings (or some other signal) they FREEZE where are and listen while new instructions are being given. They shouldn't worry if they haven't found one group when the signal to FREEZE is given — they should just go on to the next grouping. The facilitator tries to signal a FREEZE when most (but probably not all) groups have found each other.

Here are some example grouping instructions:

Find a group of 3 people you don't already know.

Find a group of 5 people who have at least one item of clothing the same color.

Find a group of 4 people who are the same age as you.

Find a group of 3 people who have the same hair color as you.

Find a group of 3 people who have a similar dental history (# of fillings, braces, &/or wisdom teeth out).

Find a group of 4 people who like to play the same sports as you.

Find a group of 4, all of whom have the same last digit in their phone number.

Find a group of 5 who have the same number of brothers and sisters as you.

Find a group of 4 people whose parents have the same marital status as yours.

Find a group of 3 all born during the same season as you, and creatively form the letter "H" using your bodies.

(If applicable) Find everyone who's in your meal crew.

Find a group of three people with the same body odor as you!

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 20-150**

## 26. BACK TO BACK

*This is a fun game that is great to break the ice on the second or third day and guaranteed to help people feel more comfortable around one another physically.*

One person stands up on a log, stool or chair. They are in charge. Everyone else should have a partner with whom they stand back to back. (If there is someone left over, then a facilitator should not participate in the game so that everyone can have a partner). You start on the chair to give them an example of how to do it. You must tell everybody which body parts to touch together. It's like Twister, but better. For instance, you say, "Knees to knees," and everyone must touch their partner's knees with their own (you no longer have to be standing back to back). Then you might say, "Left ear to right toe." Or, "Elbows to ears." Or, "Heads to toes." Each combination must be done in both directions simultaneously. Once you have done three or four, you shout out, "BACK TO BACK!" and jump off of the chair to grab a partner. Everyone else grabs a new partner. This will result in one person no longer having a partner. Whoever is left gets to go up on the Chair. You can either have it set up so each person gets a chance to give three instructions from the chair before calling out "BACK TO BACK", or that they can go on as long as they like. This game tends to get more and more outrageous, so be ready... When you decide it's time to end, step up yourself for a final Back to Back, then have everyone sit down ("And we're done! Grab a seat; butt to pillow!")

**Time: 5-15  
minutes**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 10 +**

## 27. PASS THE CLAP

*The facilitator needs to demonstrate this as well as explain it.*

The group stands in a circle. Two people turn to face each other and clap simultaneously, with their claps being only a few inches apart. One of them passes the clap on in the other direction to another person who turns to face him/her as they clap simultaneously, and the clap travels around the circle. Start slowly, but eventually try to do it as fast as possible. If people don't clap in unison, the clap is considered "dropped," and a two-second penalty is charged. Time it several times around, and see how good the group can get. Then try having participants visualize, in detail, the clap going around with incredible grace and speed. Have them imagine each person doing incredibly well, and have them picture in great detail, several times over, receiving the clap and passing it along with great speed and synchronically. Now try it again and see if the group's time has improved! This can be a nice place to talk about the power of positive thought and visualization.

**Time: 5-15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 15-150**

## 28. BUNNY BUNNY

*This is a fun and quick energizer.*

Everyone stands in a circle. You explain how it works, "I will raise both of my hands above my head like rabbit ears, and wiggle them, and say "Bunny-bunny-bunny-bunny-bunny-BUNNY!" On the last 'BUNNY', I will lean forward, look at someone across the circle, point my ears at them, and toss them my 'bunny'. While I am having my turn as the 'Bunny', the person on my left leans towards me and raises up their left arm only as a single bunny ear. Their head will be very close to mine. The person on the right will also lean in and do the same with their right hand. The people to my left and right also say, 'Bunny' with me. Whoever I toss it to comes into the same role I've been in. They will be in the middle and they must put up both of their arms and say, "Bunny-Bunny-Bunny-Bunny-Bunny-BUNNY!" while the people to their left and right are leaning in and saying it with them. The new 'Bunny' then leans forward, looks at someone, points his/her ears at them, and tosses them the 'bunny'.

**Time: 5 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 7 - 20**

## 29. FALLING TRUST

*Demonstrate this first, to make sure everyone understands.*

People partner up with someone else of similar size and height. Each pair chooses one person to go first, and s/he is the 'faller'. The other person is the 'catcher'. The faller stands, with their arms crossed over their chest, hands on opposite shoulders, legs together, and falls backwards. The catcher stands behind the faller, ready to catch them. His/her legs are apart, one foot forward, knees bent; hands are up and between the faller's shoulder blades; and s/he is standing about one foot behind the faller. As time progresses and trust builds, the catcher can move back and let the falls go farther, although s/he should never do anything dangerous. The catcher and faller should use the following commands: The faller questions, "Ready?" The catcher responds, "Ready." The faller calls, "Falling..."

The catcher says, "Fall on...". Then the faller falls backwards. The catcher should flow slightly with the motion of the faller, so that they do not jar or abruptly stop the faller. The catcher then gently pushes the faller to a standing position and steadies them, until they are ready to fall again.

**Time: 10 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size:  
any number of pairs**

## 30. TRUST CIRCLE

Players stand in a tight circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. One player stands in the center, their arms crossed on their chest, hands on opposite shoulders. The players in the circle hold their hands up and gently catch and pass the center person, as s/he lets her/himself fall back and get passed around. Make it clear that the purpose of this game is to have fun while building trust, and it is important for people to be passed around in a way that is gentle, sweet and kind. The center person's body should remain rigid with their eyes closed. Each person gets a turn in the middle. Faller may determine when they have been passed enough by calling out, "Thank you." The facilitator should also be ready to stop activity if s/he senses participant uneasiness or safety concern.

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size:  
Groups of 6-8**

### **Variation 1:**

Have the group split into pairs. Pairs should stand in two concentric circles, with catchers on the outside and fallers on the inside. Make sure all participants are in proper catching and falling stances. Each pair calls out their commands and completes two falls; then, the inside circle rotates until everyone has had a turn with a different catcher. The circles then switch roles: the inside circle becomes the catchers; the outside becomes the fallers. Repeat the process, by rotating the outer circle.

### **Variation 2:**

The whole circle re-organizes itself to gently lift the stiff body of a faller to a horizontal position. Pay particular attention to the head and neck area. Avoid lifting the faller above the group's heads; instead keep them at chest level. To return the faller to ground, the group gently rocks the body back and forth, while lowering the faller to a prone position on the grass (again, feet first, head very carefully last). When they are flat, ask the group to press their hands down on the faller for several seconds. This yields a quite pleasurable sensation. Help the faller to their feet and repeat with all those participants who wish to have the experience.

## 31. FALLING FROM A TABLE

*This trust game is good to do at a later point in a gathering. It is great for team-building and also gets the adrenaline going.*

Set up a sturdy table or find a secure ledge that any participant can stand on. The surface of the table should be between hip and chest level of the group. The higher up the ledge, the scarier the fall, but be sure to never go past the upper chest level. All the participants form two even lines, facing each other. They lift up their arms to shoulder height and reach out towards the person across from them. Their arms interlock, like the black and white keys of a piano: one of yours, one of your neighbor's, one of yours, etc. You should be able to reach out and touch the upper arms, above the elbow, of the people across from you. Make sure the arms are feeling solid.

One brave soul climbs on top of the table and turns his/her back to the group. S/he cross their arms over their chest, so they don't flail and knock someone's eyes out, and make their body as stiff as a board. They are going to fall backwards into the strong arms of the people behind them. The facilitator should let them know how important it is for them to stay stiff and straight. Otherwise, they will be harder to catch, because their weight won't be evenly distributed. Have the faller call out the commands of the Trust Fall, and then fall backward. After their fall, they rejoin the catchers, until everyone who wants one has had a turn.

An important **safety tip**: If you are catching towards the end of the line, farthest from the table, watch where their head is falling! You don't want to get clobbered. Remember, the faller cannot see where they are falling.

**Suggested Group Size: 8 – 20**

**Time: 10-20 minutes**

**Materials: a sturdy table or ledge**

## 32. PASS THE INVISIBLE

The group stands in a circle. One person makes a sound and throws it to someone else (like an invisible ball). That person catches it making the same sound and then throws it to someone new with an entirely new sound. No two sounds can be the same.

**Time: 5 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10-20**

## 33. PASS THE SOUND

Stand in a circle. One person begins by turning to the person next to them and making a sound of any kind. It can also include a movement, gesture or facial expression. The person 'received' the sound then turns to the person next to them and makes any sound that is triggered in them in association to the previous person's sound. Participants should be encouraged to be creative and spontaneous and to go with their uncensored reaction to the sound they received.

**Time: 5 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

## 34. PASS THE WORD – MAKE A POEM

Stand in a circle. One person begins with a word. Then the next person freely associates another word and so on. Anyone can say, “End”, when they feel the poem is complete. They then start with a new word. See what kinds of interesting poems you create!

Time: 5 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: any

## 35. PASS THE SENTENCE – MAKE A STORY

One person starts by saying five or more words in a sentence. The next person picks it up and freely associates to add another sentence and so on, until a story is formed. Be prepared for outrageous adventures!

Time: 5-10 minutes

Suggested Group Size: any

## 36. HUMAN ORCHESTRA – MAKE A SONG

One person starts with a rhythmic sound, like a brief vocal melody, a clapping rhythm, a grunt, or anything in-between. This should be a sound they can sustain. Then, the next person adds their own rhythmic sound, and so on, all the way around the circle. Then, once everyone is making a sound, and it has gone on for a few moments, the facilitator can speed people up, slow them down, make them louder or softer. S/he can also choose some people and have the others stop, to create special solo ensembles. Use hand signals to express these changes, which you should clarify with the participants before you begin. To end, the person who began stops, and then the next person, and so on, until, one by one, everyone has stopped.

Time: 10 minutes

Suggested Group Size: any

## 37. BARNYARD

This is a great way to get people into groups. Begin by having the group count off, 1-2-3-4-5, depending on the group size you want. Then, assign each number an animal name. For example, Number 1s are goats, Number 2s are cows, etc. Ask to make sure that everyone knows the sound their animal makes.

Then, have everyone stand up, close their eyes tight, and begin making the sound their animal makes. They should move around, looking for other people making the same sound. When they find each other, they should link arms, keep their eyes closed, and continue looking for their other fellow animals. The facilitator should NOT play, to ensure group safety. Also, let them know the following **safety tips**:

- Walk slowly and cautiously; do not charge the middle.
- No pushing, shoving or rowdiness.
- Put your arms up in front of you to avoid collisions.

Time: 5-10 minutes

Suggested Group Size: 20+

## 38. TUNNEL TAG

Give empty toilet paper rolls, or some other light prop, to a few individuals in the room (usually one roll per 8-10 people). The people with the rolls are IT. The ITs work together as a team to try and freeze everyone else by tagging them with their rolls. Everyone else tries to avoid being tagged. If they tag you, freeze right where you are and wave your arms in the air and shout, "ME, ME, ME!" until someone goes through your legs and releases you. If the ITs freeze everyone in the room, the game will be over. To keep the energy up, facilitators can yell, 'Free them!' while the group is playing.

The most commonly asked question about the game is: "What happens if, when going through someone's legs, I get tagged?" The answer is: "Don't stay on the floor and make people slide under you. Stand up, put your hands up, and begin shouting, "ME, ME, ME!" And yes, the person whose legs you went through is still free."

Let them know these **safety tips** before you begin: For the sake of the men in the room, please don't come up from the floor too quickly. Also, if you're going through one way, be careful that someone else isn't coming through the other way.

**Time: 10 Minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 15+**

## 39. YES AND NO GAME

In pairs, one person is designated as the 'YES person'; the other as the 'NO person'. The task is to come up with creative ways to say "Yes" or "No" to the other person, as if you are trying to convince them to agree with you. The YES person can only say, "Yes", and the NO person can only say, "No". Each should take a turn, one speaking, the other listening. Encourage the participants to be as creative and unusual as they can.

**Time: 5 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

## 40. LAP SHIFT

This game gives people a chance to know each other better, though from a little bit of a different angle! Begin by everyone sitting in a chair in a circle. The facilitator reads a number of statements, and if it applies to you, you should move that number of seats to the right or left, per the facilitator's instructions. Participants should sit in the new seat, whether or not someone else is already sitting there. So, if someone is sitting there, sit on their lap. Each statement should indicate a different direction (left or right) and a different number of seats. For example, you might say,

"Move 3 seats to the left if you're wearing anything at all that's black today."

"Move 4 seats to the right if you're proud to be a non-smoker."

"Move 2 seats to the left if you've ever stepped in doggie-do."

"Move 5 seats to the right if you like to sing, whether you think you're good or not."

"Move 1 seat to the left if you like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches."

"Move 4 seats to the right if you like yourself."

"Move 3 seats to the left if you play any sports."

"Move 1 seat to the right if you ever lose your temper."

"Move 5 seats to the left if you want to give or get more hugs today."

"Move 3 seats to the right if you've ever felt ashamed or afraid to cry."

"And now for the famous underwear fashion quiz. I'd like you to move 7 seats to your left if you're wearing underwear that is not white. And now move 8 seats to your right, if you're wearing underwear that are white. Wait, what's this? I see some of you aren't wearing underwear at all!"

**Time: 10 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 20-100**

**Materials: a circle of chairs, with enough seats for everyone**

## 41. BLIND WALK

Each person finds a partner. One of them becomes 'A', the other, 'B'. A goes first, being blindfolded and led outside by B, who is holding A's hand and carefully guiding A, so as to avoid any dangers or jarring bumps. They can talk if they want. A must trust B, and B must be worthy of that trust. B can lead A to different places to touch interesting things, such as trees, moss, dew-drops, cement, leaves, etc. After about ten minutes, the facilitator has them switch places, with A now led by B.

Come back all together for some group discussion questions:

- Did you find it easier to lead or to be blind?
- When you were blind, did you hear, smell or feel things you might not have otherwise noticed?
- When you were leading, what were you thinking about? How did you make decisions?
- What else did you notice?

### Variation:

Before blindfolding A, B makes a particularly unique sound. A is then blindfolded and must follow B, who is making only this sound to guide them. There is no touching or talking of any kind. After five minutes, they switch places, with A making their own unique sound for B to follow.

## 42. GROUP BLIND WALK

*This is a great way to guide the group somewhere special, and can bring a quality of the sacred to the activities that follow. It works best when the area across which the group is traveling is smooth, preferably cement. Especially good before a Council Of All Beings.*

The group holds hands, all facing the same direction. The facilitator is at one end, and s/he is the only one with open eyes. S/he leads the group at a gentle pace. Silence is observed.

## 43. CAMERA

*This works best in a place with beautiful nature.*

Pair up. One partner plays the role of camera, while the other is the photographer. The camera shuts her/his eyes and the photographer leads him/her around like on a blind walk. Periodically the photographer presses the trigger (a gentle pull of the earlobe), at which time the camera opens her/his eyes for a 1-3 second exposure, focusing on whatever is in front of the lens (their eyes). A light tap on the head signals the time to close the shutter, and the camera is led to another location. After five minutes, the players switch roles. When participants return, ask: "What did you notice? Did you see things differently? What was it like to be the photographer, and what was it like to be the camera?"

**Time: 30 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: some kind of blindfold for each participant**

**Time: Varies**

**Suggested Group Size: 4-50**

**Materials : some kind of blindfold for each participant**

**Time: 10-15 minutes**

**Suggeste Group Size: 2+**



## 44. THE BLOB

*This involves a high activity level. It's also fun, and everyone ends up a winner.*

This game requires a clear sense of boundaries. It's best played outdoors on grass, but can work in a gym, too. The larger the group, the larger the 'in-bounds' area should be. Begin by choosing an IT. Like regular tag, IT sets out to catch people. But, in this case, if you are tagged, you join up with IT and become part of the blob. Holding hands and not separating, you work in tandem to catch more people. Everyone caught becomes part of the blob. The game ends when the blob has caught everyone.

Sometimes, in a large group, it becomes too hard to maintain the blob. In this case, there are several ways to remedy the problem:

- If a blob of 4+ people seems unable to tag anyone anymore, let them split into two groups, working for the same purpose, but independently.
- Shrink the field.
- Start out with two or more ITs.

## 45. TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE

*This is a great ice-breaker.*

The group forms a circle, standing up. It should be in a bigger room. With eyes closed, their job is to form a triangle as precisely as possible. The facilitator stays out to make sure everyone's eyes stay shut. When the group thinks they've done as well as they can, the facilitator lets them open their eyes to see their triangle. Then, they close their eyes again and, this time, try to form a square. For the last round, they try to come back into a circle.

## 46. CIRCLE LAP SIT

*This game is an excellent metaphor for how we are all connected and how one person's actions can affect another, even when they aren't directly touching.*

Everyone stands in a tight circle. They all turn and put their left shoulder towards the center, so that they are lined up, each facing the back of the person in front of them. They then take as many steps as needed into the circle, until they are standing only a maximum of two inches away from the person in front of them. On the count of three, everyone slowly tries to sit down on the lap of the person behind them. This may take a few tries. Each time, praise the group on what they did well and ask them what they could improve for next time. Once they have all managed to sit successfully for a period of time in a circle, then, depending on what message you want to get across, there are a few things you can do:

- a) Have them try to take a step as a group. Left foot first, right foot second.
- b) Remove one person from the group and see how everyone adapts to the missing link.

When you finish, you can ask them, "What did you notice about relationships in this game? How are we each important for the whole?"

**Time: 10 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 15-100**

**Time: 20 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10-60**

**Time: 10-15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10 +**

## 47. HUMAN KNOTS

Players stand in a circle, facing inward. The facilitator asks everyone to raise their right hand, reach across the center, and take the right hand of someone in the circle. It should NOT be someone on their immediate right or left. Then, they should raise their left hand, reach across and take the left hand of a DIFFERENT person. Again, this person should not be on their immediate right or left. Have everyone lower their hands and notice the beautiful human knot they have created together. The group's task is to untangle this knot, without letting go of each other's hands. This process can sometimes be exhausting and occasionally painful, so the facilitator encourage the group to keep the energy up.

### Variation 1:

Try to unravel the knot with everyone silent, to test non-verbal communication skills.

### Variation 2:

Try it with everyone blindfolded, to test spatial perceptions. This is good for a group who has played the game before and needs a new challenge.

### Variation 3:

Obtain three feet (one meter) long pieces of thin rope. There should be one rope for every two people in the circle. Have people each hold one end of one rope. Invite them to make the most beautiful knot they have ever seen, without letting go of their side of the rope. Encourage them to do this quickly, without thinking. They will twist and turn and move up and around each other to form this knot. When they feel complete, have them admire their creation. Ask them to call out to each other what the knot reminds them of ("an ice cream cone", "a spider web", "a funny face", etc.) Now, without letting go of their end of the rope, ask them to unravel their beautiful knot... Again, the facilitator should be encouraging to help the group stick with the process to completion.

All of these variations invite great conversations around teamwork, the problems before us, the complicated knots in our lives, and what it takes to unravel them. Don't miss the opportunity for a powerful debriefing following this game.

**Time: 25-40  
minutes**

**Suggested  
Group Size:  
groups of 8, 10,  
or 12**

## 48. THE SOCK GAME

*This game is a beautiful metaphor for team-work. If you look at anyone else, and start thinking about how they're doing with their job, you'll fail in your task. This game requires complete focus on each person doing their own part to the best of their abilities. Once that happens, it can be remarkably simple.*

Announce in the session before this exercise that each person to bring a pair of socks to the next session. Show them how to bundle up their socks tightly to form a ball.

The group stands in a circle. The facilitator begins by calling out the name of someone in the circle and throwing a sock ball to him/her. That person catches the sock ball, calls out another person's name, and throws it on to them. The sock ball keeps getting passed along, never going back to anyone who's already had it. People must remember who threw it to them, and who they threw it to, because...

When the last person receives it, they call out the name of and throw the ball to the facilitator who started the game. This completes the cycle. Then, it begins again. The facilitator throws it to their SAME person, who throws it to their SAME person, who... And the sock ball continues to make the rounds. Typically, you want to do the full rotation twice or thrice, so everyone is clear on the pattern.

The next time around, about 20 seconds into the rotation, the facilitator picks up a second sock ball and starts it in motion, following the same pattern. And so, gradually, sock balls are added until there are half or three-quarters as many of them flying around, as there are people in the group. Keep this going for a little while. When it is totally crazy, the facilitator can take the sock balls out of circulation, one at a time.

## 49. THE SYSTEMS GAME

*This game is a beautiful metaphor for the interconnectivity of all life, and how everything we do affects everyone else.*

Participants stand in a circle. Each person secretly chooses two people, who will be their reference points. They are charged with staying equidistant from their reference points. In other words, they must form an isosceles triangle with their reference points. The facilitator should demonstrate this and show how equidistant can mean both short and long distances. Of course, they should not be obvious about who their choices are, but rather move in a stealthy manner. No other explanation should be given; just start the game.

When each person moves to adjust themselves to be equidistant from their reference points, it will trigger movement in others, which will trigger movement in still others. Soon, the group will be in a state of rapid activity. At a certain point, you can call for everyone to move at double speed, and then, a couple minutes later, call for them to move at a quarter speed. Bring it to completion by telling everyone they have 20 more seconds, and then, ten seconds later, begin a count down. When you get to zero, shout "Freeze!"

You can then ask people to guess who was following them, and also invite people to share who their references were. Debrief further by asking: Who tried to get to a neutral place and stop? Who tried to keep things lively by moving around and making it difficult? What did people observe or learn? What surprised them?

**Time: 20 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10-20**

**Materials: half or three-quarters as many pairs of socks as participants**

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10-40**

**Materials: a field or large open space**

## 50. ZAP

The group stands in a circle around two people, who are in the middle, their backs to each other, facing outwards to the rest of the group. The people in the circle should be at least 15 feet from the two in the middle. The object of group is to tag one of the people in the middle. But, as soon as they leave the safety zone of the circle, they can be 'zapped' by either person in the middle, if one of them simply points at the would-be-tagger and shouts, "Zap!" before being tagged. If zapped, the would-be-tagger sits out until another person is zapped; they then replace them in the circle. If a tag is accomplished, the tagger replaces the zapper s/he tagged. The game can continue for as long as you want.

**Time: 15-20 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10-50**

## 51. I LOVE YOU DARLING...

Everyone sits in a circle. One person volunteers to stand inside the circle. This person must pick someone in the circle and try to make her/him laugh by saying, "I love you, darling; won't you please give me a smile?" No physical contact is allowed. The other person must say, "Baby, you know I love you, but I just can't smile." If s/he can do this without laughing or smiling, the first person must go on to someone else. If they do smile, s/he must come to the center, while the other person rejoins the circle. This game can continue for as long as you like.

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 15-50**

## 52. ALL ABOARD

*The intention of this game is to develop group identity, planning and decision-making.*

Participants break into groups of ten. Make a three foot circle with rope, tape or plywood; one circle for each group. Challenge the groups to get entirely inside their circle; no one can touch anything outside of their circle, not even the ground. They must hold their circle together for the count of five (in any language). The entire team starts counting, the moment the last member has taken a position inside the circle. If they accomplish this easily, have them combine groups and try again in an even larger group.

As a facilitator, try to take a role that allows participants to develop their own ideas, but step in if you feel the group is proposing something too risky. Also, if the group feels particularly stuck, offer them suggestions in the form of questions; "Do you keep falling to one direction? How might you balance yourselves?" Remember, the group's feeling of success is as important as their actual success. Adapt the rules as necessary, to balance both challenge and success.

**Time: 60 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: groups of 10**

**Materials: 9 feet long rope or masking tape, or 3 square feet of plywood**

## 53. GIANTS, WIZARDS, ELVES

The group splits in half. The two halves line up, facing each other. There must be clear boundaries, with each group having a 'safety zone' about 20 feet behind them. The game is similar to Rochambeau, or 'Rock, Paper, Scissors'. That is, elves beat wizards, wizards beat giants, and giants beat elves. Teach the group the sound and movement that fits with a wizard, elf and giant, respectively. Giants are high, up on tip-toes, arms above the head, making a roaring noise. Wizards are middle, arms out, fingers flexing and mouths buzzing to show their magic. Elves are low, squat to the ground, hands wiggling ears, belting out a bleeping sound.

Then, each group huddles out of earshot from the other, choosing one of the three options. They must decide as a group on one option collectively. When ready, the facilitator has the two groups line up six feet apart, along a horizontal line, facing each other. On the count of three, the two groups display their 'choice' of giant, wizard or elf. Whichever group 'wins' chases the other, trying to tag as many people as possible, before the safety zone is reached. Anyone who is tagged joins the other team and becomes part of that group. Anyone who reaches the safety zone remains in the other group. Again, have the two teams separate to huddle up and choose a character. After they collectively make a decision, they line up again, the facilitator counts off, and the chase begins. It's very easy for the number of people on each team to change back and forth. You can play until you are tired, or everyone is on one side. It's a great opportunity for discussing cooperation and being flexible. And for laughing a lot!

**Time: 20 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 15+**

**Materials: a large field, open space, or a gym**

## 54. THUMPER

Everyone lies on their bellies, on the ground in a circle, looking inward to see each other's faces. They support themselves on their elbows, with their hands out in front of them. "Everybody take your right arm and lift it over the left arm of the person on your right. Your right arm should now be to the right of their left arm. Confused yet?" The players' arms will be layered: one of theirs, one of yours, one of theirs, one of yours, like the black and white keys on a piano. Each person has two 'thumpers', or arms, interlocked with others.

Have people practice thumping on the ground with their open hand. The 'thump' will be passed around the circle, one hand at a time. "When the hand next to you thumps, then you must thump next, then the one next to you, and then your other 'thumper', and so on, until it has been passed all of the way around the circle." The facilitator can try this once, by passing a 'thump' all the way around the circle, until it gets back to him/her.

If someone thumps twice with their hand, it changes the direction of the movement and sends the 'thump' back the way it came from. Try to keep the rhythm and flow going. Make speed a challenge for the group to meet together.

**Time: 10-15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 8 - 30**

## 55. LOG ROLE REVERSAL

Line the group up along a long log. Ask them to notice who's on each side and where they are in the line. Then, have them switch places, so as to create the mirror image of their original order. Obviously, no one must fall off the log as they make the switch. If anyone does fall, have the group begin again.

Afterward, debrief. What worked? What didn't? How could the group have worked together better? Did everyone feel listened to? Involved?

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: groups of 10-30**

**Materials Required: a big log**

## 56. WHOOSH BALL

*Whoosh Ball is a great game to move energy around the space, be silly and react quickly.*

Everyone stands in a circle. It starts by the facilitator blowing up an imaginary ball called the Whoosh Ball. There are two ways to pass the Whoosh Ball: either to your immediate right or left, by saying "Whoosh!", or to someone in another part of the circle, by clapping/pointing and saying, "Zap!" A Whoosh can be stopped by holding up your hand and saying, "Deny!" (with attitude), but a Zap can never be Denied. The last thing you can do with the Whoosh Ball is hold it above your head and squat down with it, saying "Aboing!" — whereupon everyone else in the circle has to squat down with an imaginary Whoosh Ball and say, "Aboing!". Even though, afterwards, you still have the ball and need to either Whoosh or Zap it, it's definitely fun to Aboing it and see the reaction.

After explaining the rules, the game begins. And you play until you feel complete with it, or until your belly aches from laughing so hard!

**Time: 10-15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 8 or more**

## 57. SECRET CHIEF

One person volunteers to leave the room. The group sits in a circle and selects someone to be the secret chief. The chief begins to lead the group in a motion, and everyone does what the chief does. The person who stepped out comes back in. S/he sits in the center of the circle and tries to guess who the chief is, while the chief keeps secretly changing the motion. The group tries to make the guesser's task difficult by following the chief as closely as possible, without making it obvious that they are doing so. If, after three guesses, they still haven't figured it out, the chief is revealed. The chief then steps out of the room, and the group chooses a new chief. Continue playing as long as you like.

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10-100**

## 58. PSYCHIATRIST

One person volunteers to leave the room. While they are gone, the game's two rules are explained to the rest of the group: 1) Answer as you believe the person to your left would answer, and 2) If you answer incorrectly, then anyone who knows the true answer can shout "Psychiatrist!" At that moment, everyone must jump up and find a new place to sit down.

When the volunteer returns, s/he tries to guess the two rules by asking anyone in the group any questions s/he wants. If/when they guess the rules, they rejoin the circle and another volunteer is sent out. Then, the group must come up with one or two new rules. For example, "Everyone must answer as though they are the President," or "Everyone must answer as if they are the person who spoke before them," or anything else that could prove challenging or interesting.

**Time: 30-60  
minutes**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 10-50**

## 59. SILENT LINES

Ask group to line up in order of tallest to shortest, while remaining silent. Then, try other challenges: line up oldest to youngest, or alphabetically by last name, etc., all while keeping silent.

At the end, debrief. What worked? What didn't? How could the group have worked together better? Did everyone feel listened to? Involved?

### **Variation:**

Blindfold each participant and assign them each a number. Scramble the group out of numerical order and then challenge them to line up in numerical order, without talking. The facilitator should not play, in order to ensure the safety of everyone.

**Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size:  
10-30**

**Materials: a long, flat area**

## 60. TYPEWRITER

One person is the narrator. S/he pretends to be typing, while telling a story out loud. As the story progresses, the story is acted out by actors who are called up from the audience by gestures from the story's author.

For example: "There once was a great prince." (Fred is called up, and stands on stage like a great prince.) "Who always said to himself: Why am I so bored?" (Fred says to himself: "Why am I so bored?") "But one day a great dragon flew down from the sky." (Sarah comes out, and acts as if flying down from the sky.) "The dragon said: Prince, listen to me." (Sarah says: "Prince, listen to me.") etc. The story goes to completion, with however many actors needed. New people can also become narrators, along the way.

**Time: 20+ minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 10+**

## 61. 12321

*This works best if new characters appear, and the scene changes, every 30-60 seconds.*

One person starts off by creating a one-person skit or scene. After 30-60 seconds, another person comes onto the stage, and creates a totally new scene. The first person may become a completely new character, playing off of what person 2 is doing. After 30-60 seconds, a third person comes in, creating a completely new scene into which the other two join. After 30-60 seconds, person 3 leaves, and persons 1 and 2 carry their earlier scene forward for 30-60 seconds, until person 2 leaves, and person 1 does his/her original scene for a final 30-60 seconds, before bowing and receiving applause. This game can be played as often as desired, using a variety of actors/actresses.

**Time: 15+ minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 8+**

## 62. FREEZE

Two people improvise a skit. At any time, someone from the audience can shout "FREEZE!" at which point the performers do just that — in whatever position they are. The "FREEZE!" shouter becomes a new performer by tapping one of the performers, who leaves the stage. The new performer assumes the old one's frozen position. S/he starts from there to create a new scene, to which the other actor plays along. This continues until someone else shouts "FREEZE!" And so on. If ever the an actor feel the scene has gone on too long, s/he can shout "FREEZE!" and call someone up from the audience to replace her/him.

Variation:

You can also use 'freeze' to make image stories with no sound or talking. One person begins by striking a pose. Another person joins by striking another pose in relationship to the first. Together, the two poses create a story, feeling or idea. The first person then leaves, while the second person remains in his/her pose. A new person then joins in, offering another pose, in relationship, which creates a new story. And so on, one by one joining and leaving to create new snapshot stories. At certain points, you can add more than two people, and then also bring these images to life.

**Time: 15+ minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 8+**



## 63. SHOW & GO

Start off with a brief demonstration of a Show-and-Go. If you don't have room for everyone to move freely through the room at once, break the group into two and have half the people present first, while the other half are the audience. The presenters act out, in somewhat exaggerated fashion, the qualities or things instructed, for 30 seconds or so (without words). A drum-beat, bell ringing, or flashing of the lights signals time to FREEZE in place, which is followed by a moment of silence, and then the next instruction is given. If there is a watching group, they are supportive without talking.

After one group is done, the other group applauds, and then they switch places.

Some suggested show-and-go's are:

- An ashamed puppy.
- A freight train.
- A melting icicle.
- A hassled businessperson.
- A nervous brain surgeon operating for the first time.
- A wave crashing.
- A hyper Chihuahua.
- A bird teasing a cat.
- Extroverted, obnoxious, and insensitive.
- A giraffe stretching way up to reach tender leaves in a tree-top.
- A 400 pound gorilla in heat.
- A love-sick and extremely self-conscious drooling moron.
- A bagel stuck in a toaster and finally being extracted.
- A seed sprouting into a flower.
- Preparing for a major experience.
- A toxic incinerator.
- A pre-Columbus Native American transplanted in modern-day New York City.
- A logger clear-cutting ancient forest.
- Learning for the first time that there are great problems in the world.
- Feeling overwhelmed by the pain and depth of injustice.
- Apathy.
- Preparing to change the world.
- Gathering tools and information.
- Empowerment.
- Aligning with the forces of the Earth and all humanity.
- Joining in solidarity.
- Receiving support.
- Inspiration.
- Spreading positive change.
- Celebrating the sheer exuberance of being alive.
- Working together.

Towards the end, you can put on a danceable, positive song, or have the audience start clapping in rhythm, as the participants really get into it. When it's over, if it's not obvious, you can signal that the group is done by saying to the audience, "Let's give them a hand!"

**Time: 30-60  
minutes**

**Suggested Group  
Size: 16-100**

**Materials: a big room, and a  
rocking sound system with  
positive, danceable songs**

## 64. IN THE MANNER OF THE WORD

One person volunteers to be the guesser and leaves the room. The others choose an adverb that ends with “ly,” such as “hurriedly,” “nervously,” “joyously,” etc. The guesser returns, and asks any number of group members (generally 1-4 works best) to take part in a skit, with a theme the guesser provides, in the manner of the word. For example: If the word was “sloppily,” and the scene given was two people fishing, then the actors would act out going fishing very sloppily. The guesser then tries to guess the word. They can also change the scene, and the actors, as frequently as desired.

If the acting has been going on for a while, and the word has not yet been guessed, the performers can exaggerate the word to an increasing degree. They can even drop hints and start using the word or parts of the word in their conversation, until it is finally guessed.

Continue with new guessers, words and scenes, for as long as you like.

**Time: 15+ minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: 6+**

## 65. CREATIVE EXPRESSION NIGHT (TALENT SHOW)

Tell the group about this special night at the beginning of the gathering, so they can prepare if they so desire. Make one facilitator the coordinator of the Creative Expressions night, so you have an emcee for the evening. They might also encourage people to prepare, or invite people to volunteer more spontaneously. Ask as many people as possible to perform something, welcoming a wide variety of expressions and talents. Anything goes! And everyone has something to share, even if it's a funny face or a little joke. You can also break into small groups, and have each group prepare a skit or performance of some kind for that night.

**Time: 1-3 hours**

**Suggested Group Size: 10+**

## 66. SPONTANEOUS SPEECHES

*This works best towards the end, when people feel comfortable with each other.*

Each person gets a turn to give a two-minute speech on a topic given by the group. S/he has 10 seconds to prepare after receiving the topic. Whenever someone is done, s/he picks the next speaker. Topics may range from slugs to racism to toxic waste. Participation should be voluntary, not mandatory. The sillier, the better.

### **Variation:**

The group gives each speaker an adverb and a noun. The presenter then speaks about the noun, in the style of the adverb. For example, s/he would talk about ‘hair’ ‘egotistically’, or ‘ice cream’ ‘secretly’, etc.

**Time: 3 minutes/ person**

**Suggested Group Size: 5-40**

# REFLECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

A SEED NEEDS QUITE A FEW THINGS TO GROW INTO A HEALTHY TREE: GOOD SOIL, CLEAN WATER, FRESH AIR AND PLENTY OF SUNLIGHT. WE ALSO NEED SUCH NURTURING TO GROW, TO HEAL AND TO BE THE PEOPLE WE ARE. THESE TOOLS OFFER PEOPLE A CHANCE TO KNOW THEIR OWN SELVES MORE DEEPLY. NOT JUST THEIR PAST AND WHERE THEY CAME FROM, BUT ALSO THEIR PRESENT AND THEIR HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE.

WHAT SOIL DO YOU COME FROM? WHAT IS FEEDING YOUR SOUL AND NOURISHING YOUR LIFE THESE DAYS? WHAT KIND OF SKY ARE YOU REACHING FOR?

IN OUR CRAZED, FAST-PACED WORLD, TAKING TIME TO SLOW DOWN, BREATHE, AND SEE ONESELF MIGHT BE THE GREATEST GIFT OF YOUR EVENT.

## 67. FREE WRITING

If you have a group, have participants count off in groups of six. Give each participant a pen, paper, and something hard to write on, and invite them to write freely, stream-of-consciousness style, on the prompt they are given, for ten minutes. The pen does not leave the paper except between words, as they write whatever comes to mind, without censoring. After writing, they will be invited to share their writing with their group. This is not about grading each other or controlling the outcome; it is about letting the subconscious speak and letting out whatever emerges. Participants are given the theme in the form of the opening words, and the writing should start from there. Possible themes could be:

- 1) To me, leveraging my privilege for social change is...
- 2) I want to leave the world with...
- 3) One thing I know about me is...

Tell participants when they have 30 seconds left, and then when time is up, ask them to complete whatever sentence they are writing. Then ask participants to form a circle with their group. Give each participant an opportunity to share whatever they want from their writing. When the groups are done, come back to the whole group and ask if a few volunteers are willing to share a piece of their writing with the whole group. Ask for a few reflections on how that felt and what people noticed in the process.

## 68. TREE OF LIFE

This is a wonderful exercise which combines art with self-reflection. It gives participants the chance to delve deeply into their past, present and future, by creating an image of a 'tree'. After completion, they can share their tree with others, either in pairs or in small groups.

**The Tree of Life consists of seven parts:**

- 1) The Roots - your history and ancestry: Where do you come from?
- 2) The Soil - your values and soul-forces: What do you ground yourself in? Where do you draw strength from? What feeds your spirit?
- 3) The Trunk - your influences or sources of information: Who or what has shaped or is shaping you?
- 4) The Branches - your creations and partnerships: What are you manifesting in the world? What organizations are you a part of?
- 5) The Leaves or Fruit - your accomplishments: What do you feel proud of?
- 6) The Blossoms/Buds - your dreams: What do you hope for in the future?
- 7) The Dead Branches - things you are trying to be free of and/or unlearn: What are you trying to let go of in your life?

After framing the activity, give people the materials they need to each draw their own tree. It usually takes about 20-30 minutes.

It is important to remind people that they are all artists, and that everyone's tree will be unique and different. It is not a competition, but rather a chance to share one's story and self. People are free to use symbols, words, whatever they like. And if they don't feel called to the metaphor of a tree, they can make whatever image they like that responds to the questions above. Also, if they are feeling short on time, remind them that just because something isn't on their tree, it doesn't mean that it didn't happen, or it wasn't important. And that they can always add more to their tree later.

After people have completed their drawings, invite them to share with each other in pairs and small groups (no more than four to a group). Preferably, each person will share with at least two other people. This can take as long as you want, typically between 30-60 minutes. You can encourage people to ask questions of each other during their presentations of their trees.

It's also good to offer a few meta-questions, like: How did you feel while making your tree? What stands out for you about your tree? What was surprising or unexpected for you in your tree?

You can create a gallery of 'trees' somewhere in your meeting space, so people can check out the ones they missed.

**Time: 30 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: pen, paper, and something hard to write on for each participant**

**Time: 60-90 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: A3 or large size sketch pad paper; markers, crayons and/or colored pencils**

## 69. RIVER OF LIFE

**Time: 60-90 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: A3 or large size sketch pad paper; markers, crayons and/or colored pencils**

This activity offers people an opportunity to reflect on their life path: all the key events in their life story that brought them to where they are now. It combines artistic expression with self-reflection. Drawings are then shared in pairs or small groups, to enable trust, connection, vulnerability and experience-exchange through storytelling and active listening.

After passing out the paper, one sheet per person, and placing the crayons/markers around the room, invite people to close their eyes for a moment. Ask them to imagine their life as river, a journey of water flow. Like all rivers, it may have had ebbs and flows, small waterfalls, twists and turns, maybe even dams and whirlpools. Ask them to think about those key moments and experiences in their lives that have shaped them? That have made them the person they are today? When you think about who you are, what life experiences were vital to your growth and development?

After a few minutes of silence, ask them to open their eyes and create their own 'River of Life'. They can use the sheet in front of them to draw their river in any way that reflects those key experiences. Words, symbols, images, can all be used in their river. Take about 20-30 minutes for people to make their rivers. It is important to remind people that they are all artists, and that everyone's river will be unique and different. It is not a competition, but rather a chance to share one's story and self. And if they don't feel called to the metaphor of a river, they can make whatever image they like to share their vital experiences. Also, if they are feeling short on time, remind them that just because something isn't on their river, it doesn't mean that it didn't happen, or it wasn't important. And that they can always add to their river later.

After people have completed their drawings, invite them to share with each other in pairs and small groups (no more than four to a group). Preferably, each person will share with at least two other people. This can take as long as you want, typically between 30-60 minutes. You can encourage people to ask questions of each other during their presentations of their rivers. It's also good to offer a few meta-questions, like: Where did you feel vulnerable in your river? Where did you feel joy? What is one experience you want everyone to know about, if they are to really understand you?

You can create a gallery of 'rivers' somewhere in your meeting space, so people can check out the ones they missed.

# 70. PROJECTION GAME

**Activity Time: 30-45 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 2+**

People can do this in teams of two or three, as long as all the teams are of the same size. Each team goes off somewhere a little ways away from the others. Each person chooses an inanimate object (preferably natural, and something they can touch, such as a stick, rock, leaf, piece of dead plant, moss, hill, tree, or bark). Each person gets a turn to speak, while the other(s) listen. The speaker speaks as the object s/he has chosen, saying whatever s/he notices and/or believes about it. It can be helpful to start with just the physical aspects and bridge from that into our own projections. For example: "I am this stick. I'm light brown, short and plump, and young. I like to swing in the air hanging from trees. I used to be connected to a tree, but I wanted to be closer to the Earth, so I came down to the ground. I felt pretty disconnected from everything, all the way up there..." The idea is to let a little projection seep in there: not to be completely objective. After three minutes, the listener(s) ask questions of the speaker, who answers as the object s/he represents.

Possible questions might include:

- 1) Do you have many friends?
- 2) Do you feel like you have a purpose in life? What is it?
- 3) Is there anything you're afraid of?
- 4) If you could say one thing to humans, what would it be?
- 5) What do you most enjoy in life?
- 6) Whatever else comes to mind.

This period lasts three more minutes, and then it's time to switch. When each person has had a turn, it's time to bring everyone back to the big group for a few minutes of discussion. Questions to ask might include:

- 1) What did you notice while doing that?
- 2) Did anyone see similarities between the object you represented and yourself?

Explain the concept of projection, and how who we are has a lot to do with what we perceive in the world. Explain how ten different people could be given the same object and say completely different things.

- 3) How does projection affect your life?
- 4) Any other thoughts or questions?

# 71. POSTURE

**Time: 15-30 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 10+**

*This works especially well after Show & Go's*

Explain that the way we stand or sit affects how we feel and how we come across. Have everyone stand up and walk around the room, noticing their posture and other people's posture. Ask them to walk around the room, expressing the following beliefs through their posture:

- I'm not good enough.
- Things are bad and getting worse and it's all my fault.

Have them take a few deep breathes, and then try postures for the following beliefs:

- I am self-confident and successful.
- I am a gift to the world.

Then have a discussion of which postures portray which emotions, and of how we can create our emotions through our postures, too. Ask everyone to slouch, look down at the ground, and put a depressed look on their faces. Then ask everyone to look at the ceiling with a smile on their face for 10 seconds, and see if it changes the way they feel. Have them look up and smile while feeling depressed, and down with a frown while feeling happy. Is it hard? Discuss it a little more. Are we going to create our environment, or be created by it?!

Then have people pair up to talk about what they just experienced. Have them each take a turn answering the following questions: Is there any level at which feeling bad is a choice? What do you get out of it? What is your "recipe" for feeling bad? How do you sit, stand or walk? How do you put yourself in that state if you decide to? Is there any level at which feeling good is a choice? What do you get out of it? What is your "recipe" for feeling good? How do you do it? What does it look like?

Come back together and ask how that was for people, and if there's anything they take from it that might be useful or applicable for themselves in the future.

## A NOTE ON PARTNER SHARING

The next few exercises, as well as many others in this manual, use the format of partner sharing, in which "Person A" and "Person B" take turns answering specific questions, while the other listens.

There is great power in questions. Some enhance comfort and trust. Others bring up challenging issues. Some empower, while others inspire. As important as the speaker is the listener. It is vital to explain the power and importance of the listener's role in partner-sharing. They show with their body language and their attention that they care about the speaker. They can create a safe and supportive space, so the speaker can as deep as feels comfortable. It is also important to support and encourage the speaker to really use the safe space if it's there. Try to take a few risks and share things that might be challenging and uncomfortable. Everyone should also know that there is no need to share anything that doesn't feel right to them.

This activities manual includes many questions that can be used in partner sharing as part of a series, and that is how they are generally intended. But some of the questions can also stand on their own, or in combination with other questions, in a variety of other formats, including: whole circle sharing (especially with a small group), where the question is passed around the circle with each person answering it; personal writing time (where participants answer one or a series of questions on their own in writing); and sharing with a partner who writes down your answers and gives them to you at the end.

Remember that you can also invent new questions, as well as cut out questions that seem excessive or inappropriate.

## 72. HOPES AND INTENTIONS

**Time: 30 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: In pairs**

*Note: This works well early in a camp or workshop.*

Everyone finds a partner. The pair decides who will be “A” and who will be “B.” The facilitator must ask each question twice, first prefacing it with “A, ask B...”, and the second time, “Now, B’s ask the A’s...” (the same question). Allow 1-3 minutes for each answer.

1. What is your name and your age, and where are you from?
2. What got you interested in working for change?
3. What have you done, and do you want to do, to work for positive change in the world?
4. What are your deepest fears for this (day, week, or whatever)?
5. What are your deepest hopes for this (day, week, or whatever)?
6. What patterns of interaction do you carry, that you would like to let go of? How do they bring pain or difficulty into your life?
7. What direction do you want to move in as a person? What qualities do you want to grow in? As you move out of old patterns, what do you want to move into?
8. If you were to make a commitment that would help you get more out of this (day, week, or whatever), what would it be?
9. What are some gifts you see or things you appreciate about your partner?

## 73. SELF IMAGE

**Time: 30-45 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: In pairs**

Everyone finds a partner they don’t already know well. The pair decides who will be “A” and who will be “B”. The facilitator must ask each question twice, first prefacing it with “A, ask B...”, and the second time, “Now, B’s ask the A’s...” (the same question). Allow 1-4 minutes for each answer; increase the time allotment if people have more to say as you go along.

- 1) What is your name, where are you from, and how old are you?
- 2) What do you like about yourself? What do you not like about yourself?
- 3) What do your parents and friends like and not like about you?
- 4) What is there about you that other people fail to see?
- 5) How do you fear being judged or stereotyped? Or, What do you never want anyone else to say, do or think about you again?
- 6) What would you like your friends to say to you or remind you of that would help you or that you’d appreciate?



## 74. DEEP SHARING WITH A GOOD FRIEND

Time: 45 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: In pairs

*Note: This exercise is intended to facilitate deepened sharing between close friends or family members. Most of these questions are probably only appropriate between people who already know and trust one another fairly deeply.*

*Sentences to Complete and Hear Completed:*

- 1) *One thing I appreciate, respect, and love about you is...*
- 2) *One gift you've given me is...*
- 3) *One time I felt especially close to you was...*
- 4) *One time I felt especially far away from you was...*
- 5) *One place I've pulled back in our relationship is...*
- 6) *One time I felt hurt in our relationship was...*
- 7) *One time I may have hurt you was...*
- 8) *One piece of baggage or clutter I've brought to our relationship is...*
- 9) *One thing I want you to know is...*
- 10) *One (or more) thing I want from you is...*

## 75. HOW THEN SHALL WE SERVE?

Time: 20 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: In pairs or small groups

In pairs or small groups, ask participants to share their answers to these questions:

- 1) What has been a defining pain or struggle in your life's journey, and how has your response to it helped you to grow in wisdom, faith or compassion?
- 2) What might be intersection points between your gifts (what you're good at doing), your passions (what you love doing), and what the world needs?
- 3) What do you love about the planet and its people? How does your life-work connect to this love?
- 4) What's something that puts you in touch with the pain of our times? What is your work around healing this pain?

## 76. RELATIONSHIP SHARING

**Time: 20 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: In pairs**

Below are different types of sentences, which can take things to a deeper level fairly quickly. They work best following a good introduction around taking off the masks and taking a risk to be vulnerable. “A” is given two minutes (or so) to start every sentence with the same phrase, completing it with whatever is in their heart or mind to share. Then, “B” has two minutes to do the same with the sentence. Then, “A” is given the next sentence to complete for two minutes, and so forth. You can decide which and how many of these you would like to do.

Sentences to complete and hear completed:

- 1) One thing I would like to ask of you is...
- 2) One thing I appreciate about you is...
- 3) One thing I might be afraid to tell you is...

## 77. QUICK PARTNER INTERVIEWS

**Time: 20 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 4+**

This activity breaks the ice and gives participants a chance to begin to know each other.

Each person finds a buddy – ideally someone they don’t already know. They sit facing their buddy. The facilitator might say, “You happened to receive the perfect buddy for this exercise. It has been cosmically ordained that this person is exactly who you needed to be with.” The group is then given four questions to interview their buddy with:

- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- What gets you on fire? What are you most passionate about?
- What is something surprising or shocking that I wouldn’t know just by looking at you?

# 78. MESSAGES FROM THE HEART

Time: 45-60 minutes

Suggested Group Size: any number of pairs

Materials Required: markers and/or crayons and drawing paper

Note: The exercise can be done without art, but it's better with it.

Everyone finds a partner. The pair decides who will be "A" and who will be "B". The facilitator must ask each question twice, first prefacing it with "A, ask B..." , and the second time, "Now, B's ask the A's..." (the same question). Allow 1-3 minutes for each answer.

- 1) What was one of the first things you saw that made you think something was wrong in the world?
- 2) What issue in the world concerns you most? Why?
- 3) Do you think that human life will survive the next 200 years? Why or why not?
- 4) A magic genie has just popped out of a bottle and is giving you three wishes. What do you wish for?
- 5) Now, design a billboard using markers and paper. What question will you ask the world? Imagine that whatever you write or draw will be seen throughout the world, and the only text must be in the form of questions.

Allow 15 minutes for billboard drawing. After they are made, gather the group in a circle. You might first silently pass the drawings around, so everyone can have a look. Then, invite anyone who would like to share their billboard in detail with the group. You can ask follow-up questions about the power of media and how we can use to convey our concerns.

## 79. INNER/OUTER CIRCLE SHARING

Time: 1 hour  
Suggested Group Size: 10+

This exercise is great near the beginning of a gathering.

The group divides in half and forms two circles; one sitting inside the other, with each person facing a partner. Everyone sits down. The facilitator will ask a question and give each partner time to answer. After one or two questions, the inner circle will move to the right to find a new partner, while the outer circle stays in the same place. Everyone should have a new partner. Proceed with another one or two questions, then move again, etc. You can have a hand signal, like a high-five, between partners before they move on to the next one, to create a dance-like feeling.

- 1) What are your family roots, or ethnic background, and what does this mean to you?
- 2) Where do you live? Where were you born?
- 3) What is your vision of an ideal world?
- 4) Who are your heroes/heroines, your sources of inspiration, alive or not? Why?
- 5) What kind of animal do you think is most like you and why?
- 6) What kinds of music do you like? What are some of your favorite bands? Why?
- 7) Would you rather be rich or famous? Why?
- 8) What would you do with one million dollars if you had to get rid of it all today and you couldn't invest it?
- 9) Do you consider yourself to be an introvert or an extrovert?
- 10) What are your interests? What do you do with your free time?
- 11) What would you most want to do for a living if you could do anything?
- 12) What excites you most in your life right now?

It's a good idea to leave time/space at the end of this sharing process, so people can carry on with their conversations.

## 80. DIFFERENT GAME

Time: 15 Minutes  
Suggested Group Size: 10+

The facilitator calls out different qualities, i.e. hair color, and people find someone they don't know, who they may not normally talk to, who has a different hair color than them. When they find someone, they turn back to back and hook arms with them. Once everyone seems to be hooked up, the facilitator asks the pairs to turn and face each other and answer a question. They find a new person after each share and answer a new question.

Qualities/Questions

- 1) Different height: Share your biggest hopes and your biggest fears for the gathering.
- 2) Different Ethnicity or Cultural Background: Share the four most important things to you in your life and why they are important to you.
- 3) Different gender or opposite sex: What do you most want to do for a living and why?
- 4) Different Size Family: Who is a source of support for you? Who do you support?

## 81. IF YOU REALLY KNEW ME

Adapted from Challenge Associates  
Time: 15-20 Minutes  
Suggested Group Size: groups of 4-7

Begin by framing the power of listening to each other and creating safe space, and the importance of using that space, to be vulnerable and share a little deeper than you might normally. That's what this exercise is all about.

Break into small groups (all the same size as one another if possible). Each member of each group will have two full minutes of absolute group attention. Each person will first have one minute to complete this sentence over and over again.

"If you really knew me, you would know that I..."

They should share things about themselves that the others might not know just by looking at them. Facilitators should give a few personal examples before the groups begin.

Then, the group will have one minute to ask the person some questions, to get to know them on a deeper level. When this second minute is up, move to the next person, and so on, until everyone has shared. Be sure to tell them not to move on to the next person, until the person sharing has had their full and complete time. The facilitator keeps track of time and tells them when to switch.

## 82. LIVING YOUR DREAMS

Time: 20 Minutes

Everyone finds someone they don't know. The pair chooses a "A" and a "B". The facilitator asks each question twice, once for A and once for B. Allow 2-3 minutes for each answer. The questions are:

- 1) What blocks you from achieving your dreams or pursuing your passion?
- 2) What do people fail to see about you?
- 3) If you were freed from all other obligations, and all your material needs were met, and you had completed the best education on earth, what would you do in the next five years?
- 4) What resources, knowledge and support do you need to help you pursue and achieve your dreams?

## 83. ART EXPRESSIONS

**Time: 20-30 minutes/occasion**

**Suggested Group Size: 1+**

**Materials Required: paper and colored pens/colored pencils/paint/crayons**

Art is often an effective way for people to assimilate what they've been learning. It's important to stress that you don't have to consider yourself 'an artist', or even to think you have any talent at all, to express yourself through art. After all, as Ananda Coomaraswamy once said, "An artist is not a special kind of person; but every person is a special kind of artist." You might want to lead the group in something involving art every day, with a different theme on each occasion. After art sessions, you can invite people to share their drawings and what it means to them. You can also set up galleries in your meeting space. Art can also be an option during free time and lunch.

Suggested themes include:

- Draw your ideal world.
- Draw a picture of how you feel right now.
- Draw a picture for the person to whom you are secret angel. Keep it hidden, until you secretly deliver it, of course.
- Draw a picture of the way you fear being seen by others.
- Draw a picture of the way you want to come across to others.
- Draw a picture of successfully accomplishing your goals.

## 84. TRANSFORMATION CEREMONY

**Time: 1/2 hour + at least 1 minute/person**

**Suggested Group Size: 8+**

**Materials Required: a site where you can have a fire (although, a big metal bowl outdoors can be made to work), and paper and pens for all**

*This is excellent on the last night of a gathering.*

Explain earlier in the day that tonight, you will be having a very special ceremony that has been deeply valuable to many people. In fact, the more people put into it, the more valuable it will be to them.

The ceremony starts with 30 minutes of alone-time, where people disperse and sit silently, in nature, with pen and paper. The goal of this time is for each person to think of one quality/belief/attitude that s/he is ready to let go of in life, AND one quality/belief/attitude that s/he is ready to open to in the future. It should be as simple and clear as possible. Each person should write these two things down on two separate pieces of paper.

Then, the group gathers around the camp-fire (or around the metal bowl in a fire-safe place, if a camp-fire is impossible). Have a tune-in and some kind of invocation (invoking the four directions, singing a song, chanting, reading a poem, etc.).

Each person steps into the center of the circle, one at a time, when s/he feels ready. If they feel comfortable doing so, they read their 'letting-go' statement, or else, simply say a few words about it. Then, they put their paper into the fire, as a symbol of releasing it and offering it up to the powers that be. Everyone in the group says, "We hear you, brother," or "We hear you, sister." If you're using a bowl, use a lighter to carefully burn the paper.

Then, the person reads (or says a few words about) what s/he wants to open to in life. The group responds with, "We support you." This paper should be saved. It can be put into a letter, to be mailed to the person at a later date, or somehow 'planted', as a seed to grow. The ceremony continues until each person has had a turn.

# 85. SEED CEREMONY

Time: 60-100 minutes

Suggested group size: 5-7 people per small group; 8 or more doesn't work; 5 is the smallest that works; 6-7 is ideal

It's helpful to call this a ceremony, not an exercise or an experience or a process, because there is a strong ritualistic component to it. A Seed Ceremony is most appropriate with a group that has already established a significant bond of trust. The more safe people feel, the more valuable it will be.

"We're now going to do a very powerful and very beautiful ceremony, called the Seed Ceremony. For many, this has been a tremendously nurturing and life affirming experience. As you're aware, we have all picked up conditioning from this culture that, in many cases, does not truly serve us and does not truly serve life. As a result, we all have patterns of thinking and acting which are not in complete alignment with our highest good. We can think of them as weeds in our life garden. This is a ceremony to replace the weeds — the beliefs we want to let go of — with something much more life-giving and affirmative of our souls. That's why we call it a Seed Ceremony."

Have everyone get comfortable, and consider inviting them to close their eyes.

"Think back, now, to a time when you really felt awful, when you seemed to be out of touch with the beauty and creativity and magnificence of your spirit. Perhaps the incident occurred in your childhood, or maybe more recently, perhaps even this week. It was a time when you were hurting. Perhaps it was a time when a parent or other significant person said something hurtful or mean, and you did not know how to be yourself in the situation."

Pause to give them time to think in silence.

"Now imagine, if the wisest being in the universe had materialized, to be there with you as a presence of infinite wisdom and compassion. They had a total and exquisite understanding of exactly what you were going through and what you needed. And, they had spoken to you in a simple sentence beginning with your first name. What would they have said? This simple sentence, beginning with your first name, will be the seed that will grow long and well in your internal garden as a result of this ceremony. It might be something like:

Fred, you're safe now.

Sally, you can receive love.

Judy, you can be whoever you want to be.

Aqeela, you can do anything you want.

Jose, you can express yourself fully.

Linda, trust your feelings.

Bill, you are a wonderful human being.

Take a moment now, to come up with a seed sentence, a simple reminder or affirmation that speaks to your core issues with loving acceptance and empowering support."

Pause again while they do this.

"Can we hear the seed sentences that each of you have come up with?"

The facilitator listens to their sentences. Watch out for ones that are negative, i.e. "Fred, you aren't bad," or "Julie, you don't have to hurt yourself." In those cases, ask if there is a way the person can say the same thing in a positive way, i.e. "Fred, you are good enough," or "Julie, you can nurture yourself." The ceremony is most effective with affirmative seeds. If someone comes up with one that is too long or complex, ask if they can shorten and simplify it.

"In a few minutes we're going to break into small groups of 5-7 people, but first, we'll do a demonstration of what you are going to do with these seed sentences in these small groups. We need someone to volunteer to have a truly extraordinary experience of being loved and nurtured."

It's a good idea here to choose someone who is not too anxious or self-conscious, someone who is fairly at ease with themselves. It can be pretty intense to be the subject of this demonstration. Have that person lie down on their back, in a comfortable location, on a carpet or on a blanket in the grass. Then have six others sit around the person, two sitting on either side of the person who is lying, one sitting at their head, and one sitting at their feet. You should be one of the six people. If there are others present who have done this in the past, or who have especially strong singing voices, it would be helpful to have them be among the other six, too. Then you speak to the whole group.

"When you are in your small groups, you'll go off and find a place where you aren't too close to other groups, and a place where you can be in this type of position comfortably. When you've found your place, you will all sit in a circle, in silence, breathing together. Then one of you will sense it is your turn to lie in the center, and you will lie down in the center on your back, much as Karen is lying here now. You will then, clearly and simply, state your seed sentence, beginning with your first name, such as 'Karen, you can receive love.' Then, you close your eyes and begin breathing deeply. The group around you will take three deep breaths with you, and then, as they continue to breathe deeply with you, inhaling as you inhale and exhaling as you exhale, they will all raise their hands together, and then slowly, and very carefully and tenderly, will all bring their hands at the same time to touch you. Then, their hands moving as if they were the many hands of a single being, they will begin to massage you. As they massage you together, they will also begin to sing to you, chanting your seed sentence, allowing any tune, melodies, and harmonies that fit the feeling to come forth. It can be anything from a simple tune, like a nursery rhyme, to a five-part harmony. It can also change as it progresses. Just let it flow.

The group will massage and sing your seed to you for about six or seven minutes, and then will slowly let their voices subside, and then gradually allow their hands to come to rest on you. After a few breaths during which their hands are still, they will help you sit up, and then invite you to open your eyes. Then, one at a time, the circle members can hug you, and one more time say your seed to you. When all have had a turn and hugged you, you will take your place in the circle, and then the group will sit in silence until someone else lies down, thus initiating the next cycle of the ceremony. Does anyone have any questions?"

Answer their questions. Then, do a full demonstration with the volunteer you have before you. After the demonstration, ask again if there are any questions, and ask whether everyone is comfortable now with the seed sentence they came up with before. Several people may want to change theirs. Again, be sure they are phrased in the affirmative.

Then ask, "Want to do it?" It is possible that some people will say they don't want to be that vulnerable. Never force a person to do this ceremony. Sometimes merely voicing their concerns and feeling the permission not to participate shifts things so the person wants to take the risk. Other times, you might ask them if there is a 'safer' way they might participate. If there are several people feeling this way, you can form a 'safe group' and work with them separately to come up with a ritual they feel comfortable with. It's important for the group to see that people are not pushed to perform.

Have those who are comfortable and ready break into small groups of 5-7 people. You can have them count-off to form these groups. Or you can let them find a partner they feel comfortable with, and have the partners find two other pairs to work with. Whatever makes sense to you. Remind them again that it takes courage to receive, and thank them for being willing to undertake this ceremony for the good of all beings.

After the groups are done, you can go directly into a meal or free time, as each group will need a different amount of time to complete the ceremony, and you don't want to interrupt them. Be sure to let them know of this plan, BEFORE they leave the space in their small groups.



# CO-LEARNING AND DIALOGUE

NOW THAT THINGS ARE COOKING, YOU WANT TO ADD MORE FUEL TO THE FIRE AND LOOK AT WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER. THIS NEXT SET OF TOOLS HELP TO CREATE SPACES WHERE PARTICIPANTS CAN BRING FORTH MORE OF THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES, IDEAS AND QUESTIONS.

THE FIRST SET OF PROCESSES ARE MORE GENERAL IN NATURE; THEY CAN HELP YOU TO EXPAND ON THE THEMES OF YOUR GATHERING AND BE ADAPTED FOR A VARIETY OF PURPOSES AND CONTEXTS. THE SECOND SET DEAL MORE SPECIFICALLY WITH RELATIONSHIPS, CONFLICT, DIVERSITY, CULTURE, ECOLOGY, AND OUR FEELINGS AND CONNECTIONS TO ALL OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS.

AT ITS CORE, EVERY ACTIVITY IS ABOUT LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER THROUGH EFFECTIVE LISTENING AND HONEST ENGAGEMENT.

# 86. OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Time: at least 1 hour  
Suggested Group Size: 10+

Materials: notecards or post-its, a large poster paper, pens and markers

Open Space Technology is a way to help the group self-organize into participant- instigated and participant-led discussions and workshops.

## Preparation

- Select at least 3-4 physical meeting spaces.
- Select a total time frame (e.g. 12pm-6pm).
- Set the time length of each open space session (e.g. 2 hours = 12 –2, 2-4, 4-6)
- The names of the meeting spaces and the times are put onto the wall on a chart. Meeting places on top, horizontally. Times along the left side, vertically. Write in large letters and spread it out so it's easily visible.

## Process

Participants are gathered and rules explained: “You are going to have a chance to convene a workshop or discussion on any topic you like. You don't even have to lead it. It may be on a topic you want to speak on, and it may be on a topic you wish to discuss. It can be a question you have. It can be a space to teach or to learn. It can be a personal issue or a work-related issue. Anything you want.”

“Once we've put up our sessions, we have to remember only one law. It's called the Law of Two Feet. It means that if you don't like the session or want to do something else you have two feet and can walk somewhere else. You are **100%** responsible for your experience.”

“There are a couple different roles you can play. You can be a **tree**: These are people who will be rooted in one place. They are the hosts of the session, the one who selected the topic and invited the rest to join. They'll be in the entire session from start to finish. You may want to be a tree, even if you are not a host, because you like the topic and feel committed to it. You can be a **bumblebee**: They go from group to group within a session, buzzing around. They offer real value in cross-pollinating. You can be a **butterfly**: Not necessarily going to any sessions at all. Fluttering around, adding their own beauty and energy to the space. Each role is beautiful and useful!”

“Also, everyone should know the Four Principles of Open Space. They are: Whoever comes are the right people. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have. When it starts it's the right time. When it's over, it's over. These principles give us freedom to enjoy what is, and not worry about what should have been. They are freeing and help with self-organizing.”

Pass out a notecard to each person and a pen. “If you have a session you would like to convene, please write it legibly in a few words on a piece of paper. Also, include your name.”

After 2-3 minutes of silence, ask people to stand up one-by-one, if they have a session to host. They read what's on their card and say a sentence or two more of explanation. Be strict with this brevity, so the process keeps moving along. The person then places their card on a time slot and location on the large poster. The benefit of doing it this way is topics are both announced and explained, and it gives people a chance to consider whether or not they want to propose their own session, after hearing others' proposals.

Once everything is up on the wall, take only five more minutes of time to negotiate and move things around. Some people will combine sessions, others will move times so they can participate in the things that interest them most and not have to choose between two 'must' session. Some people may drop a session, because something else is being offered that meets their needs. A certain portion of the group (those not proposing any specific sessions) may not be participating in this process at all, and for their sake, it's important to limit it to five minutes maximum, before they start to drift away.

Give a final review of the sessions. This isn't a time for discussion, just a quick recap of the descriptions. Then, groups go off to their sessions.

**Note:** Ensure there is a time keeper selected to signal for each group when there are only ten minutes left in a session, and again, when it's time to switch.



There are some things you might want to share in framing Open Space Technology:

**Responsibility:** You're in charge here. You create this experience. You'll get out of it what you put in. Give this session your all.

**Choice:** You may feel overwhelmed. "There's too much good stuff to do!" You may find yourself wanting to go to each session, plus take a nap, and go for a walk! It's not easy, but let's face it – it's a beautiful thing in life if all of the options facing you are good! Having to choose between many great things is a quality challenge.

**Time:** You may feel, "We just barely got into it after two hours!" Remember, this is only a beginning. You can continue conversations afterwards.

**Note-taking:** Decide in advance if you want to have people take notes, or come back and share with the group as a whole. It really depends on the value/usefulness of the notes, or on the need for whole group integration at that time. Note-taking, however, is not at all necessary for Open Space Technology, though it can be nice for cross-pollination. For this, you need to make sure the notes go somewhere accessible to all.

## 87. WORLD CAFÉ

**Time: 2-3 hours**

**Suggested Group Size: 12 or more**

**Materials: poster paper, markers, a café setting, with small tables and chairs, if possible**

The World Café is a tool developed by David Isaacs and Juanita Brown (and friends), to support conversations that matter. It draws upon a café ambience to have small group dialogues that rely on the principles of cross-pollination, exchange, co-learning and connecting the dots. Facilitators set up the room with a number of tables, each decorated a bit like a café, with maybe tea/coffee, cookies/snacks, and a little vase of flowers. Plan for about 4-6 people per table. Each table should also have a sheet of poster paper (as the tablecloth) and several markers. You invite the group to divide up and sit at the tables, perhaps with people they haven't had a chance to connect with yet.

Once settled in, you ask if one person at each table will be the 'host' of that table. That means, they will remain in that place for all three rounds of the Café, and that they will help to facilitate the conversation and report back at the end (in whatever format you want).

The facilitator then offers a question for the first round, and each table/group explores that question. They use the markers to take the notes that they want on the tablecloth-paper. After about 20-30 minutes, everyone except the table-host gets up and moves to different tables, to be with a whole new group. The second question is then given, which typically builds upon the first one. This new group gets to bring their insights from their different table conversations together, and also gets to see what the last group left behind on their tablecloth-paper. They can add more notes to the paper, as the conversation becomes richer and more insightful. Again, after 20-30 minutes, everyone except the host gets up and moves to a final table, to be with another whole new group, and the third and last question is given.

You can have more or less rounds, but typically, there are three rounds in a World Café. We have found that it works best when you want to explore a problem in stages of complexity, and it helps to break it down into more manageable chunks of conversation that build upon one another. For example, it could be: Round 1, What are the critical struggles you see in our times? Round 2, What resources or skills do you have to respond to these struggles? Round 3, What kind of support or community would you want to strengthen your response? What might we do together that would

these struggles? Round 3, What kind of support or community would you want to strengthen your response? What might we do together that would help us all?

If you have time, it is fun to prepare a little 'menu', which sits on each table and has all three of your questions, as an appetizer, main course, and dessert. In any case, you should try to have the three questions written and visible around the room somewhere.

At the end of all three rounds, you can take a break, and then invite the hosts to come back and share a summary or insights from what happened at their table. It is nice to come up with a more creative way to do this than straight-up 'reporting', such as asking that they present what happened as a newsfeed, or as a radio program, or in a poem.

For more information or ideas about the World Café, visit their website, [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com), which has blogs, stories, resources and contact information.

**Time: 2 hours**

**(60 minutes for making collages;**

**60 minutes for debriefing)**

**Suggested Group Size: any number**

**Materials: cut-up-able magazines,  
scissors, glue, A3 or large size paper**

## **88. COLLAGES OF THE HEART**

Collaging is a great way to unleash the artist within everyone, because it doesn't require anyone to draw or paint (stumbling blocks for a lot of people). Rather, it lets people take images from magazines and arrange them in such a way that portrays their own thoughts and feelings. Collaging pulls on our intuitive sense and lets us produce an image that reflects our inner and outer world. It's also good fun: all the ripping, cutting, gluing, etc.!

At many events, there may be a question or concept you want to explore, and collaging can be just the right media for doing that. For example: What is your sense of the current state of the world, and where are you in it? Or: What thresholds are you currently standing at in your life? Or: What does power and privilege, dignity and shame, mean to you? It can be any question, really, but it should be relevant to the conversations/questions of your particular gathering.

Ask people to try and let themselves be guided by intuition, rather than rationality, in making their collage. They should look for images, not necessarily to fulfill some pre-planned design, but rather because it calls to them instinctively. Encourage them to find 10-15 images before making their collage. They can arrange the images however they want to on the page, and again, invite them to do it intuitively instead of intellectually. (Note: It is not easy for many people to listen to their intuition, so be sure to make this a request, rather than a demand.)

After the collages are made, ask people to get into small groups of 4-5 and share their work with each other. It can be done in many ways, but one practice is to let the image first be shown, and ask the rest of the group to comment on what they feel and see in it. And then the artist-creator can have a chance to share what they felt while making it, what they notice in it and how it relates to the question posed at the beginning. Divide the time equally in the small group, so everyone has a chance to share. If needed, there can be time/space for big group conversation about insights, challenges and learnings as a whole. It is not necessary, however.

### **Variation (only requires 60 minutes):**

If you don't have time for a full collaging session, but want to use imagery to advance a conversation, you can pose the question, and then have people look through magazines and pull out three images that instinctively speak to them. Take 15 minutes for that. People can get into small groups, share these images and then have a collective conversation about their feelings and ideas for about 45 minutes.

## 89. MIND-MAPPING AND BODY SCULPTING

Time: 10-60 minutes;  
variable, depending on how you want to use it  
Suggested Group Size: 10 or more  
Materials: large poster paper; colored marker pens

In many events, you may feel the need to define terms, to bring out diversity in meaning and understanding of key aspects of your conversation. Mind-mapping is an easy and fast way to bring out everyone's opinion and ideas, without getting bogged down into a heavy lecture or convoluted discussion.

Put poster paper up on the walls of your meeting room, one for each word or concept you're trying to explore. For example, in the Leveraging Privilege for Social Change Jam, we had one sheet with the word 'Leverage', one with 'Privilege', and one with 'Social Change'. The more people in the room, ideally, the larger the paper size, so that you have enough space for everyone to make at least 3 legible marks on each sheet. Hand out marker pens, one or two per person. Let people know that we're going to have the opportunity to make a collective mind-map: a sort of 'unloading' of our ideas and understandings of key terms in our conversation, but made visible so we see the diversity of perspectives in the room.

Invite people to walk around the room and put down the concept/word/idea that comes to mind when they see the word on the wall. They can also build off each other's words. For example, someone wrote 'blessing' off of 'privilege', and then another person wrote 'burden' off of 'blessing'. Encourage them to use lines, squiggles, circles, etc. to connect their thoughts and ideas with others. They can also write questions or make drawings, if those seem more appropriate to them. Ask everyone to write legibly, so it can be easily read by the group.

Take about 10-15 minutes for people to move around the room, writing/drawing/mapping/marking. The activity should mostly be silent, though people may make small comments to each other or themselves. They can re-visit each poster several times to see others' thoughts and connections, and further explore and put down their own. After people seem complete with the mapping and have put down their markers, you can do a number of things: small group discussion; whole group discussion; or just leaving the posters up as a kind of guidance for the group in noticing our diversity around these terms.

**Variation: Body Sculpting:** One very interesting follow-up, if you have time, is to ask people to spread out around the room for a word 'sculpting' process. You can let them know that they will be trying to gain further connection to peoples' perspectives, by literally embodying them. It also enables the activity to move from the head to the body, which is a deeper level of learning.

As the facilitator, you pull particular words off the different posters, and ask people to use their bodies as clay and 'sculpt' this word — try to strike a pose that reflects its meaning to you. Contrasts and provocative words are especially powerful — for example, 'burden' and 'blessing'. Give people a few seconds to make their sculpture; it should be instinctual, not intellectual. Then you can have them look around the room, not breaking their pose.

You can try this with several different words, but probably no more than 3-4 off of each of your posters. With the last one, you can ask people to cluster with people who were similarly posed, and then sit down in that small group for further discussion about meaning and relevance of the word/concept to their own life and work. You can then bring the conversation back to the whole group, to get a sense of what peoples' insights and learnings were around these terms in the conversation.

Do this activity in a space where everyone is easily visible to each other, so that it feels a little contained in a space. Also, make sure to do it in silence.

**Variation 2: DJ-ing Images:** You can also have people build a group sculpture around a word, where they figure out how to connect up to one another based on their body shapes. Once in their 'sculpture', ask people to freely monologue for about 20 seconds on what they are feeling in the moment. Everyone should speak at once. Then, ask them to find an essential word or phrase that captures their feeling. They should shout this out a few times, again all together. For the last step, let them know you will be moving around the space. When you touch them, they should shout out their phrase. They can also add a movement to their sculpted pose. In this way, you will be DJ-ing their image of the word, creating a medley from the different thoughts and movements. Playing hip-hop beats in the background can add to this very powerful experience."

# 90. ISSUE CLUSTERS

**Suggested Group Size: 12-50**

**Materials: a chalk board, dry erase board, or flip chart, and markers or chalk**

**Note:** This works especially well a short time before Truth Mandala, perhaps 1/3 or 1/2 of the way through a week-long gathering.


- 1) Have the participants brainstorm key issues facing our world today that they either know a lot about, or want to know more about. Try for a list of perhaps 20-30 issues. Write them all down in a way that everyone can see.
- 2) Participants each pick one issue on the list. It should be where they would most like to share their knowledge. Conduct straw polls for each item to see how well represented it is (one vote per person). Then, to form groups of 3-5, you can try the following:
  - Any issue with zero votes is scrapped from the exercise.
  - If any issue receives more than five votes, participants are invited to join another group that has only one or two members.
  - Groups with only one or two members are invited to combine with one another, if they feel they are similar, or go ahead and join another group.
- 3) When the groups are all organized, they cluster in small circles, all within earshot of the facilitator, though far enough apart, so as to not distract each other very much.
- 4) Each group picks a moderator, whose job it is to help everyone be respected and heard in the process. The members then share the knowledge they have on the topic. They will probably want to do a go-around, and then open it up for discussion, although they can use whatever format they like. They are given 15 minutes for each of these questions.
  - a) What do you think is the root of the problem?
  - b) How did you first learn about this issue?
  - c) Share your knowledge about it. Why do you think this issue is important? What about it most affects you?
  - d) What can we do about it, individually and collectively?
- 5) Each group prepares a five minute presentation to share with the group, passing on information, inspiration and empowerment on their topic in a creative, entertaining, and informative way. This presentation should use at least four mediums: speaking, dance, poetry, song, rap, spoken word, drumming, etc. They have 25 minutes to prepare, though, likely they will ask for more. It is good to start this process and then go into a meal or long break and come back in the next session for presentations.
- 6) Each group gives its presentation. Give them a one minute warning, and cut them off if they go on too long. Then, have a five minute maximum question and answer session, if members of the audience want to learn more.

## 91. COLLECTIVE FILM SCREENINGS

**Time:** depends on length of film and how long you need/want to debrief  
**Suggested Group Size:** any  
**Materials:** film of your choice

The visual medium can be great for highlighting certain issues, or connecting the stories and experiences that you are having in the gathering to a wider web of people, places and events. Occasionally, we have screened films as a community in order to launch into deeper dialogues on a theme.

When choosing a film, keep a few things in mind: Make sure it's an exceptionally good film. You are going to be taking a few hours of the gathering to watch and discuss the film. View the film ahead of time, to be sure it's worth everyone's time and attention.



Prepare some good discussion questions. Try to anticipate what might come up from the participants and link it to what you are trying to raise in the gathering at that point. Remember, many people are not used to discussion after watching a film. So, they may need to be provoked with some thoughtful questions.

Consider having partner or small group discussions, as opposed to a big group one. It allows more people to get involved in the conversation, and with some good opening questions, can lend additional depth to the film screening experience.

Think about the time of day in which you're showing the film and the venue for it. Make sure it's a space where people can all see the screen, is relatively comfortable, and doesn't come at a point when people are too tired and might fall asleep.

## 92. APPRECIATING DIVERSITY

**Time:** 30 minutes  
**Suggested Group Size:** 20+

This activity is excellent as part of a series of exercise on the topics of diversity, judgments, and respect. It goes well towards the beginning, although it's also a great way to create resolution and harmony if the group ever gets bogged down, or just as a celebration of uniqueness. People invariably feel good and honored for the very things that might have led them to feel separate before.

"It can be hard to put ourselves in boxes based on identities, especially when a lot of us have felt that other people have put us in boxes, just so they could poke pins at us. But this exercise is about celebrating our uniqueness, and honoring each other. So, while it will involve putting yourself in certain categories, and you might have a resistance to that at first, I invite you to be adventurous, and see what it's like to let your unique culture be appreciated."

Have the group form a circle. The facilitator explains that s/he is going to call out a series of categories, and for each one, if it fits for someone, they should step into the center. People can step in for as many categories as fit — there is never a need to choose just one. Each time one or more people step in, the group claps for them with gusto, cheering for the gifts, experiences, and qualities these people add to the group.

If some of the categories are not represented, the group should simply notice that in silence for a moment, and then you will call out the next

category. After each section, ask if anyone has been left out, and if so, have them announce their group, step into the center, and receive applause. Preface the following categories with: "Step into the center if you're a..." Complete each category with asking: "Did we leave anyone out? What other (ethnic groups, religions, etc.) are represented here?"

**Ethnicity:** Native American, Afro-American, Pacific Islander, of Middle Eastern decent, Latino/Latina, Asian, Euro-American, Jewish.

**Religion:** Jewish, Christian, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, Deep Ecologist, Pagan, Quaker, Hindu, Agnostic, Unitarian.

**Sex/Sexual Preference:** (these first two can be combined if the group is unlikely to have many, so those who fit them can have a larger group for support) gay or bi-sexual male, lesbian or bi-sexual female, heterosexual male, heterosexual female, you're open to whatever and not sure how life will unfold.

**Geography:** (list regions, represented states, or countries, depending on the group).

**Musical Taste:** you like hip-hop, you like rap, you like jazz, you like new age, you like rock, you like heavy metal, you like funk, you like reggae, you like R & B, you like classical.

**Age:** (categories will vary, depending on the age range of the participants, but make sure to include at least four represented age groups).

**Language:** (will vary depending on where this is taking place, but a US example might be: English is your first language, English is your second language, you speak multiple languages, you speak only one language.)

**Diet:** Raw foodist, meat-eater, lacto-ovo vegetarian, vegan, macro-biotic.

**Musical Instruments Played:** You play the guitar, you play the flute, you play the piano, you like to sing in the shower, you like to sing whether or not other people think you sound good, you play the trumpet, you like to drum, (make sure to invite other entries!).

**Season of Birth:** You were born in the spring, you were born in the summer, you were born in the fall, you were born in the winter (this can also be done by astrological sign).

**Anything Else:** What else do you want to feel acknowledged for? What are some other forms of diversity in this group?

## 93. CULTURAL COMMUNITY

**Time: 60-90 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 20+**  
**Materials Required: Pens and paper.**

Ask people to brainstorm a list of groups represented here, and within which people present have felt stereotyped or judged unfairly. It might be things like: environmentalists, youth, vegetarians, guys with long hair, straight-A students, women of color, African-American teens, etc. The brainstorm should only include identities to which people in your group belong. Record the brainstorm on a large piece of paper (or several). Then



have each person, in silence, choose one they feel fits them, and for which they have felt a significant amount of judgment from other people. Then go over the categories, one at a time, and have each person raise her/his hand for the group s/he has chosen. Make sure they understand they can only choose one group. If any group has only one person, ask him/her to join another group unless someone else wants to join in. Go over the number of people signed up for each group to make sure everyone is signed up, and that no one has signed up more than once.

Each group meets in a separate location. They choose a note-taker, who records what the group members say. They each take a turn answering each of several questions (which the note-taker should get from the facilitator and write down before they start). Suggested questions are:

One thing I like about our group is:

One time I felt oppressed as a member of this group was:

One thing I never want anyone else to say, do or think about our group is:

One thing I want other people to know about our group is:

Give each group 20 minutes to share their thoughts and come up with answers to these questions. Add another 15 minutes for them to create a presentation that expresses the feelings of the group's members.

Next, all the groups reconvene, and the groups, one at a time, present their conclusions and feelings. The audience can clap, and should show support, but cannot ask questions or make statements.

When every group has had a turn, give 15 minutes or so for people to ask members of other groups questions. People can also share things they've learned. Facilitate it closely, making sure no one speaks without raising her/his hand first.

## 94. CULTURAL SELF-IMAGE

Time: 45 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: 10+

Ask people to place themselves in a broad culture with which they identify — such as lesbian, white man, Native American, Asian, etc. They can choose whatever they want, as long as it's not too eclectic or complicated. Then, each person pairs up with someone who is not in the same category. They stand up, facing each other, and each takes a turn asking questions, while the other takes a turn answering. The questions (which each person should write down first, so they can do this at their own pace) are:

- 1) "You are now going to talk to everyone who is part of my culture or group (for example, a Caucasian male). Imagine that I represent all of them. Don't ever speak in the 'we', as if you too were a part of my group. Instead, always speak in the 'you'. Talk to us. Tell me what you don't like about us. Let your feelings flow." They listen, until partner is finished, and then ask:
- 2) "Now tell me, what do you respect and appreciate about us?"
- 3) "What do you think we, uniquely, bring to the world?"
- 4) If you could say one thing to everyone in my culture or group, what would it be?

Then have the partners switch places. Allow a total of about 15 minutes for this stage. Then bring everyone back together, and ask them if they learned anything new.

# 95. JUDGMENT CIRCLE

Time: 45-60 minutes

Suggested Group Size: 10+

Materials: tape and pre-made judgment tags

(made the night before, not two minutes before the start of the activity!)

This exercise makes the assumption that every person has negative stereotypes of other people that they may or may not be aware of. Through media, school, and other aspects of our society, we have messages sent to us about certain generalized groups of people. i.e. different races, sexes, classes, styles of dressing, addresses, names, etc. Our beliefs about people are like a window. Many stereotypes are like dirt on that window. By becoming more conscious of that dirt, we can take steps towards cleaning our 'windows' and seeing the world and all of its beautiful people a little more clearly. We can judge people a little less swiftly, and start along the journey towards letting go of stereotypes.

Make sure participants understand that we know that they would not think the things that immediately come to their minds during this exercise, if they were given time to formulate a real opinion. Its purpose is to bring the judgmental part of us out, even if it's something we don't necessarily want to admit to ourselves. It can bring up unpleasant things, and it's crucial to stay clearly grounded in the distinction between the 'dirt on the window' and the people. After all, a good solvent finds and dissolves the dirt, but not the window.

Sometimes, as it comes off, the dirt can splatter on people. An important part of this exercise is being conscious of any hurt feelings anyone has, and not taking people's dirt personally. This exercise is all about the stereotypes and judgments people carry, and not in the slightest a reflection of who you are.

Two facilitators and two rooms are required. The labels should be written in advance on note cards. Here are some suggestions for labels (feel free to create others): Logger, Corporate CEO, Environmentalist, Hippie, African-American Man, Latina Woman, White Person, Soldier, Heavy Metal Head, Athlete, Republican, Cheerleader, Celebrity, Communist, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Skinny Person, Housewife, Foreigner, Overweight Person, Vegetarian, Homeless Person, Teacher, Prostitute, Teen-ager, Old Person, Coach, Factory Worker, Farm Worker, Asian Woman, Homosexual, Beautiful Woman, Native American etc.

- 1) Break into 2 groups, A and B. One facilitator takes Group B into another room.
- 2) Group A: Everyone stands in a circle, facing inside, with plenty of space between people. The facilitator places a label on each person's back. No one is allowed to see their own label. The label should not fit the person in question, in any way at all, if possible.
- 3) Group B: While the members of Group A receive their labels, the other facilitator explains the following process to Group B: The group without labels will walk silently in a single file line into the room and around the outside of the circle. Each person will read someone's label and whisper in that person's ear the first (no censoring is acceptable) thing that comes to mind upon reading it. (The person with the label cannot respond.) The whisperer needs to be sure to be close to the ear and whisper loud enough to be heard. No physical contact is allowed. Then they will move on to the next person, continuing until everyone in group B has had a chance to react to each label.
- 4) After the first round of this process, Group B stays where they are. This time it is Group A that goes to the other room.
- 5) Repeat the process. While Group B is now having the labels applied, Group A should be in the other room. Ask them to stay silent and simply think about what they heard. They then enter the room, and go around the circle, whispering their first impressions in Group B's ears. These labels on Group B should be different from the ones used by Group A.

6) After this second round is complete, both groups come together for a whole group discussion. In a go-around, each participant shares what kinds of things they heard, how it felt, guesses what they think their label says, and then removes it to see what it actually is. They also share what they learned, how it felt to share their first impressions, and what, if anything, surprised them.

The facilitator should make sure to explain the 'window' concept described above. Don't let anyone apologize for things they said — make sure they understand this exercise is about uncovering the 'dirt' we've picked up. Ask people to speak from their heart, and be honest. It is often hard for people to admit things like this. Try to lead the discussion to a positive, action-oriented outcome. Ask people what they can do to break down judgment barriers and stereotypes. Ask how this exercise will change the way participants look at the world. Possible questions include:

- Did you find it easy to judge others?
- Were you honest with your judgments?
- Did you get carried away?
- How did it feel to be judged?
- Have you made similar judgments of anyone in the past?
- Have you ever felt hurt by people's judgements? Have people ever felt hurt by yours?
- Can you do anything that will help you release needless judgements and see people more clearly?
- When you see the pain that stereotypes and judgements cause, how does that affect you? Do you want to make any commitments coming out of that awareness?

**Time: 90-120 minutes**

**Suggested Group Size: groups of 20**

**Materials: two large rooms; two facilitators and two ushers; three chips for each player, plus 10 extra for each of the two groups; a flip chart, dry-erase board or chalk board, and markers or chalk**

## 96. CROSS CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Adapted from Rowland Russell, *Cascadia Quest*, and from *Bafa-Bafa: A Cross Cultural Simulation*, by Gary Shirts.

This activity is most applicable with a very diverse group, representing many different cultures and communities. It is a cross-cultural simulation game that helps players to:

Experience feelings similar to those they may feel when living in a different culture.

Observe unspoken rules in another society and interact with members of that culture.

Stimulate discussion and common reference points for our different cultures — including the potential for misunderstandings and the opportunities to learn from and appreciate one another.

### Flow of Activity

- 1) Introduction to game and assignment to cultures
- 2) Explanation of rules and practice time
- 3) First observers exchanged (2 per culture)
- 4) Observers return and share observation; Q/A time
- 5) First exchange of visitors (3-4 per culture; don't exceed 4)

### Time

- 10 min.
- 25-30 min.
- 3 min.
- 5 min.
- 3 min.

### Flow of Activity

- 6) Visitors return to own culture and share experiences
- 7) Repeat steps 5 and 6 two more times
- 8) Gather groups together for de-briefing

### Time

- 5 min.  
16 min. total  
30-60 minutes

Facilitators divide players into two groups, Blues and Greens. Separate them into two distinct rooms, with a facilitator and an usher for each group. Each facilitator distributes three chips and a color label to each player in their group. Then, s/he goes over the rules of their group carefully, demonstrating the desired behaviors. Encourage questions. Do **not** answer any questions about the other group's protocol.

### Instructions for the Greens

You are a member of the culture from the land of Greenling. You are known as Greens. There are several things about your culture which you have learned to be important when interacting with others. Demonstrate the following cultural characteristics

- \* You never look other people in the eye.
- \* When speaking to another, always keep a distance of at least two feet.
- \* Males stand aside females when talking, never face to face. Males may talk to males face to face, and females may talk to females face to face, but you must stand aside each other when talking to someone of another gender, and no matter what, you never look anyone in the eye (demonstrate).
- \* Touching is OK, but to speak about one's body is forbidden and rude.
- \* You may only ask yes or no questions.
- \* You exchange chips when you greet each other and as you say good-bye.
- \* If you run out of chips, borrow from each other. You must always share your chips.

### Instructions for the Blues

You are a member of the culture of the land Bluesia. You are known as Blues. There are several things about your culture which you have learned to be important when interacting with others.

- \* You only talk to people when they face you.
- \* You only speak into the other person's ear.
- \* You never touch other people because it is rude.
- \* If another person touches you, the conversation ends abruptly because you walk away.
- \* Your word for agreement is "OH".
- \* Your word for disagreement is "HMMM".
- \* You exchange chips when you greet each other and as you say good-bye.
- \* You have one person who distributes more chips when you run out of them.

Each facilitator then has their group members practice these behaviors until they are comfortable in that culture. After practicing, ask them simple questions to ensure that everyone understands (for example, What do you do if someone touches you? How do you say "Yes" in Bluesia?)

Now comes the fun part. Tell each group that they must learn as much as possible about the other culture. They should take their roles seriously and treat members of the other group with respect. Send two volunteers (ideally participants from different countries or backgrounds) as observers to the other culture. They are to interact with the other group and to find out what cultural rules the other society follows. They may not ask questions about cultural rules. They may take written notes if they wish. (Ushers will direct these observers to the appropriate room as well as ensure that they return to their own culture after the allotted time.) Meanwhile, the other Greens and Blues continue with their daily life, interacting

with the members of their society, according to the rules that are important to them. The observers will stay for three minutes and then return to their own culture. When they come back, they will describe what they saw and how they think the other culture works.

Send the next group of 3-4 visitors (again, ideally, participants from differing backgrounds) to visit the other society and to interact with its members using the knowledge shared by their predecessors. Again, stay only three minutes. Ushers will help with timing. When they return, these observers also share their information with their own people and (hopefully) more rules are understood.

Continue to exchange visitors, until all the members of each group have had an opportunity to interact with the other society. If you run low on time, send larger groups of visitors. Make sure every participant has a chance to visit the other culture.

Leave a minimum of 30 minutes to debrief, or preferably, one hour. For some players, this simulation helps to surface their feelings, anxieties, or misinterpretations when interacting with others who follow different cultural rules. For others, this simulation further imprints upon them that different cultures may live their daily lives according to another set of rules. Whatever conclusion each person arrives at is the right one for her/him at that moment of learning. If any painful feelings have been aroused, it is the responsibility of the facilitators to see that such feelings are aired and discussed to the satisfaction of the participants. Adequate time should be allowed to accomplish this. Do not add. Do not delete. Simply honor the person's realization. Debriefing supports a person's journey of awareness, by providing witnesses to acknowledge the growth at that particular moment in one's life.

To begin debriefing, write on flip charts (or dry erase board or chalk board) all of the observations made by players, even if they repeat another person's observations. Someone may not understand another's use of language, so the 'repetition' is actually a new idea for them.) Write in more than one language, if applicable and if you are able.

- 1) Bring the cultures together into one group circle. Have the Greens sit on one side, and the Blues on the other, facing each other.
- 2) Ask the Greens to explain the Blues' culture (in one/two word descriptions).
- 3) Ask the Blues to explain the Greens' culture (in one/two word descriptions).
- 4) Ask each group how the visitors appeared to them.
- 5) Ask each group to describe their feelings and thoughts, when they visited the other society.
- 6) Ask each group to explain its own culture.
- 7) Ask members of both groups which culture they would prefer to live in and why.
- 8) Ask how communication differed between cultures. How did they feel about these differences?
- 9) How did they discover the other's rules? Did they change their own behavior to fit in? Why or why not?
- 10) Ask for experiences of cultural misunderstandings from participants' actual lives. Have there been any so far in this group?
- 11) Ask how they can use this information to figure out the cultural rules that they actually live by. How do these rules fit into their daily lives? How do they interact with different people, within their peer group, within school?
- 12) Wrap-up: How can they apply what they have learned here to better understand themselves and others during their experience together?

# 97. CONFLICT RESOLUTION EXERCISE

Time: 60 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: 6+

- A) BLAME: Share in a blaming way.
- B) REFLECT: Think about how it felt to be “blamed”.
- C) MIRRORING: Paraphrasing the words and reflecting the feelings.
- D) SHARE WITH COMPASSION: Taking responsibility.

*The following steps are a “script” of what the facilitator says during the exercise. Notes to the facilitator are in italics.*

## **BLAME: Share in a blaming way.**

- 1) Everyone pick a partner. Sit directly facing each other.
- 2) Pick an “A” and a “B.” All A’s raise your hand. All B’s raise your hand. What a group!
- 3) Now everyone take a moment to think of someone with whom you have been in some sort of a conflict in the last year. It could be the president of a highly destructive company, or it could also be a parent, a teacher, a friend, or anyone else with whom you’ve had a sit
- 4) *Give everyone a moment to think of the person.*
- 5) Raise your hand when you’ve thought of someone.
- 6) In this exercise, you will all have a chance to speak to the person you are thinking of. First, A will speak to B as if this is the person with whom you have a conflict. B’s, your job is to listen silently, without responding. You cannot talk during A’s turn. A’s, your job is to speak with as much judgment and blame as possible. Consider it your job to tell the person you’re in conflict with just exactly what’s wrong with them. Start as many sentences as possible with the word “you.” For example: “You are totally judgmental and have no tolerance for other people’s opinions. You’re closed-minded, heartless, selfish, mean and stupid.” Does everyone get the idea? Begin.
- 7) *When everyone understands what to do, signal A to start speaking. The A’s have three minutes to speak. Make sure everyone is ready to move on before continuing.*

## **REFLECT: Think about how it felt to be blamed.**

- 8) B, take a moment to think about how it felt to listen to A. How would you feel if you really were the person in a conflict with A? Share this with your partner.  
BLAME: Share in a blaming way.
- 9) Now reverse roles. The B’s have a chance to speak to the A’s. A’s, your job is to listen silently without responding. B’s, you’re going to speak with as much judgment and blame as possible. Consider it your job to tell the person you’re in conflict with just exactly what’s wrong with them. Start as many sentences as possible with the word “you.” Begin.

10) *The B's now have three minutes to speak. Make sure everyone is ready to move on before continuing.*

**REFLECT: Think about how it felt to be blamed.**

11) A, take a moment to think about how it felt to listen to B. Would their style have made you feel open-minded? Defensive? Let them know what you felt.

**MIRRORING: Paraphrasing words and reflecting feelings.**

12) Okay! Now I want to introduce a concept we call 'mirroring'. So A, I want you to say a word, and whatever it is, I want B to 'mirror' that word, by saying it right back to A. Try it a few times with a few different words.

13) *Make sure everyone understands what to do; then give the signal for A to start.*

14) Now B, try saying a few different words that A will mirror back to you. Take another minute to do this.

15) Now A, try saying a whole sentence. It could be anything. And B, you're going to mirror that. For example, if A says: "I like green tomatoes," then B would say, "You like green tomatoes." If A says: "You're my friend," then B would say, "I'm your friend." Try this with a few different sentences, to get the feel for it. Begin!

16) Did that work okay? Any questions? Okay, now switch. B will say a few sentences, and A will mirror each of them.

**SHARE WITH COMPASSION: Taking responsibility.**

18) Now remember that conflict we were just exploring? It's time for A to have another chance to speak to B. This time, talk from your own experience. Express yourself honestly and yet compassionately. Treat B the way you would want to be treated if you were in their shoes. Start as many sentences as possible with the word "I." For example: "I feel hurt sometimes, when I feel de-valued by you. I work very hard, and sometimes I feel like nothing I do is good enough." B, listen carefully, because, in a little while, you're going to mirror your partner.

19) *When everyone understands what to do, signal A to start speaking. The A's will have approximately three minutes to speak.*

20) B, think about how it felt to listen to A. Would you react differently from how you would have reacted the first time? Now B, you're going to mirror back what you heard A say. For example: "I hear that you feel hurt sometimes, when you feel de-valued by me. You work very hard, and sometimes it seems like nothing you do is good enough." A, listen carefully to see if you've been heard. Notice if B misses anything important to you. B, the idea is not to use the same exact words, but to express all the same points you heard, possibly in less words. Any questions? Begin.

21) When everyone is complete, ask: "A, do you feel heard? Tell B if s/he missed anything, and then B, mirror back what you missed the first time."

22) *Wait a few minutes for the pairs to complete.*

**SHARE WITH COMPASSION: Taking responsibility.**

23) Now B will have another chance to speak to A. Talk from your own experience. Express yourself honestly and yet compassionately. Treat A the way you would want to be treated if you were in their shoes. Start as many sentences as possible with the word “I.” A, listen carefully, because you know what’s coming up next.

24) *The B’s will have approximately three minutes to speak.*

25) A, take a moment to think about how it felt to listen to B. Would you react differently from how you would have reacted the first time? Now A, you’re going to mirror back what you heard person B say. B, listen carefully to see if you’ve been heard. Begin.

26) When everyone is complete, ask: “B’s, do you feel heard? Tell A if s/he missed anything, and then A, mirror back what you missed the first time.”

27) *Wait a few minutes for the pairs to wrap up.*

28) Find a non-verbal way of thanking your partner.

29) Now let’s form a circle without talking.

30) *This is where a discussion will take place. Suggested questions for discussion include:*

- Which style did you find easier to listen to? Why?
- What normally happens to you in conflict situations? Do you gain more understanding of the person and become better friends, or do problems grow?
- Even if the first way of communicating might not be very effective for resolving conflicts, how did you feel about it? Did any of you enjoy getting things off your chest? How might you deal with that kind of energy?
- Were any of you surprised by anything that happened in that exercise? How many of you feel like you learned something from that? What?
- What did you think of the mirroring process? Was it hard, or easy? Why? Do you think it could help some people understand each other better? How did it feel to be mirrored? Did you really feel heard?
- How can we best support each other in remaining respectful and open-minded, and communicating clearly, during conflict?
- What do you define as a healthy balance between considering the other person’s feelings and standing up for your self?

**Variation:**

It can be fun to begin this activity up with some funny, silly skits about ‘ineffective communication’. Show them what not to do! Parent vs. child, or friend vs. friend, work great.



# 98. VIOLENCE/NONVIOLENCE

Time: 20+ Minutes

Suggested Group Size: 5-200

Materials: sheets of poster paper and colored pens

On two pieces of poster paper, first brainstorm: What is violence? Then brainstorm: What is nonviolence? You'll get a variety of responses to each. Make space to discuss differing views and perspectives.

# 99. THE BLUE-GREEN GAME

Time: 1 hour

Suggested Group Size: 10-60

Materials: In advance, create two tick-tack-toe like grid sheets that look like this:

Round Number:	1	2	3	4	5
Team A		x2=		x3=	
Team B		x2=		x3=	

Scoring System:

- 1) If "A" and "B" each choose blue, they each lose 3 points.
- 2) If "A" chooses blue and "B" chooses green, "A" scores plus 6 and "B" scores minus 6
- 2) If "A" chooses green and "B" chooses blue, "A" scores minus 6 and "B" scores plus 6.
- 3) If "A" and "B" both choose green, they each gain 3 points.

*This only works if all participants have never played it before.*

### Directions:

Form two equal-sized groups ("A" and "B") and place them in locations that are visually separate (and sound separate, too). The facilitator goes to each group and tells them:

"Choose a team captain. I am going to read these instructions three times and that's all. The object of this game is to win. To win you must obtain a maximum number of positive points. I am the game master, and I will only communicate with your team captain. Every round, each team will choose a color (either blue or green) by majority vote. Every person must vote. In the event of a tie, the team captain decides. There will be five rounds. Once again, the object of the game is to win." (Repeat twice more).

Then explain the scoring and give the team their scoring tally sheets. Go through this process with team "A" and team "B." Then it's up to each team to choose either "blue" or "green." Check with their team captains every couple minutes until their teams have taken a vote. Both teams must complete a round before either team can proceed to a new one. The third round's score is doubled. The fifth round's score is tripled. When all five rounds have been completed, bring the teams together for an all group dialogue.

Ask people what they noticed. How did the game feel? Did the teams finish with positive points, or negative points? Remind participants that the object of the game was to win, and ask if they interpreted winning to be limited to their team, or to include both teams. What can we learn from

this game? How does it relate to war, peace, and disarmament issues? Or to violence in our cities and communities? What will it take to stimulate trust between people on seemingly separate teams? This activity is sure to stimulate a lively discussion.

## 100. CONFLICT RESOLUTION/ NONVIOLENCE ROLE PLAY

based on Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed  
Time: 1-4 hours,  
depending on size of group and other factors  
Materials: pens, paper, masking tape or name tags

Note: This exercise has potential for creating upset feelings. Actors often take their characters seriously and experience real emotion around what transpires. It is very important that a safe space is created, that the participants are prompted with basic nonviolence/conflict resolution principles, and that they are fully taken through the closing debrief process and are removed fully from their role in the enactment.

- 1. Identify conflict scenarios:** Begin by brainstorming potential conflict scenarios with the group. They can range from a political action, like a demonstration at an abortion clinic, to an interpersonal conflict, like an argument in a family.
- 2. Break into small groups:** After you've completed the brainstorm, inform the participants that they are going to break into small groups of 4-5 and choose one of the scenarios to act out (or they can choose an entirely different scenario that might have more relevance to them). They should try to be as detailed as possible in creating the characters of the situation. Each character's name, age, ethnicity, occupation and general position should be defined in the scenario. Participants should write their character names on a piece of tape and attach it to their shirt. The physical environment and the opening of the scene should also be defined. However, the outcome of the scene is not to be determined. It should remain open, without any pre-conception of what the final culmination will be.
- 3. Frame the process:** Once the groups are ready, the facilitator reminds the participants that the intention is to resolve the conflict. They should use conflict resolution skills to maintain nonviolence and ensure that all parties feel heard. The end goal is a win-win solution.
- 4. Play out the conflict scenarios:** One group at a time will come before the 'audience' of all the other groups. They will present each character, the setting and how the scene will begin, but not how it will unfold. The facilitator, who is not involved in the role play, calls, "Action", for the scene to begin. As actors proceed, the facilitator may call "Freeze", if s/he feels that the role play is getting cloudy, moving away from resolution, or real tension/violence is beginning to ensue. The facilitator should ask the actors to consider where the scene is heading and how they can shift the direction to help each person feel more heard and to move towards resolution. The facilitator then calls, "Action", for the scene to continue. If the role-play reaches a resolution, it will naturally end. But, if the role-play seems to be going on without approaching any clear resolution, or if any form of violence is taking place, the facilitator calls, "Cut", for the scene to end immediately. In either case, the facilitator moves on to the next step.
- 5. Debrief the role-play:** Each character then sits in a chair in front of the audience, remaining in character. The facilitator then asks the first character, "How are you feeling? What happened for you? Were you heard?" Then the facilitator asks the character to stand, remove their name tag, and attach it to the back of their chair. The facilitator asks "Who are you now?" and the actor states her/his true name. **This is very important to do.** It is the psychological/symbolic removal of the character from the emotions the actor experienced during the role play, so they do not carry those emotions with them. The facilitator asks how the actor, now out of character, feels about the role play.

Finally, the facilitator asks them to turn to the chair, which now represents the character they were, and says, “Is there anything you would like to say to your character?” Continue this process with each and every member of the role play.

6. **Get feedback from the group:** Once each member has been debriefed, the facilitator asks for feedback from the audience: “Do you feel the conflict was resolved? Was it a win-win solution? How could the characters have acted differently to ensure everyone was heard?”

7. **Proceed with the other groups:** Invite the next group up, and go through the process all over again. Continue until every group has had a chance to role-play, be debriefed and receive feedback. You can take a last set of comments/questions at the very end.

## 101. FEELINGS FOR OUR WORLD

**Time: 30-45 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: any number in pairs**

Everyone finds a partner they don't already know well. The pair decides who will be “A” and who will be “B”. The facilitator has B complete all the sentences, and then the partners switch and A has a turn. Allow two minutes for each answer, but feel free to increase time allotments, if people are have more to say as you go along.

- 1) I think the condition of our society is becoming...
- 2) What concerns me most about the world today is...
- 3) When I think of the world we will leave our children, it looks like...
- 4) I carry with me these kinds of feelings about all of this...
- 5) The ways I avoid these feelings are...
- 6) The ways I use feelings are...

Follow this with discussion, either in small groups of six or as a whole group. What came up? Did you say anything that surprised you?

## 102. EVIDENCE OF THE GREAT TURNING

**Time: 30-60 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 5-100**  
**Materials: a chalk board, dry erase board, or flip chart, and markers or chalk**

The Great Turning is what Joanna Macy refers to as the “great awakening” or the “turning of the tide.” The concept is that we are on the edge of a vast transformation in our world, and the change may come sooner than we think. In fact, it may have already begun. And if we're on the look-out for the dawn, perhaps that will give us hope to persevere through the darkest and coldest part of the night.

Introduce the concept, and conduct a brainstorm, taking notes, on “What evidence do you see that the Great Turning might have already begun?”

# 103. WEB OF LIFE

**Time: 30-45 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 15-40**  
**Materials: at least one very long roll of string or yarn**

Participants stand in a circle. The facilitator explains that each participant will soon become a strand in the web of life. They can be animals or plants, and are asked to silently, without telling anyone, choose the life form they will be. One person starts, saying (for example) "I represent the dandelions." This person holds the end of the string. Next, someone who is directly connected to the dandelions states who they are and what their connection is to the life form that started. For example: "I am the deer, and I eat dandelions." The string is then used to connect the first and second life forms. Then another life form jumps in, stating how they are connected to the second one, and adding another strand to the web. This process continues until everyone has been included in the web. If anyone is unsure how they connect to anyone else, they can ask for help from the group. It shouldn't be too hard, because everyone is interconnected.

Now, tell the group that toxic waste has been dumped, killing one of the group's members (choose one). Have that person tug on the string, and have the two life forms attached to them state how they are impacted by the fallout from this one disaster. Have the life forms attached to them say how. Add in a few more environmental problems, finding out how each is affected by ozone depletion, acid rain, etc. We're all connected!

# 104. PLANETARY CITIZEN

**Time: Version A: 20 minutes**  
**Version B: 1-3 hours**  
**Suggested Group Size: 2+**  
**Materials: Version B: paper (ideally on a clipboard or pad) and pen for everyone**

## The Four Questions

- 1) What do you see as the greatest problems we face in the world today?
- 2) Do you think it's getting better or worse, and why?
- 3) Do you think there's anything that an individual like you or I can do?
- 4) What gives you hope?

Version A is a partner-sharing exercise, with each partner answering all four questions to the other. At the end, invite them each to say what they appreciated about the other's sharing, and anything else they are left wanting to say. Give 1-2 minutes per answer for each person, and then 2-4 minutes for appreciation and talking at the end.

Version B is more adventurous. Participants go out into the world to conduct a 'survey' of the general public. They spread out, staying with a 'buddy' for safety reasons, and can either knock on doors in a neighborhood, or (most effective) talk to people in public places like street corners, or in or outside bus stations, libraries, malls, train stations, or stores.

While ostensibly a survey, and certainly a great way to get a feel for how every day people feel about these vital issues, this is also an opportunity to practice listening, and to give people the opportunity to be heard. It is a powerful way for participants to take the safe space of a gathering and discover their capacity to share it everywhere they go. For many of the people interviewed, this experience will be an important event, prompting them to connect with their depth of caring in the most non-confrontational of ways.

The survey-taker/listener must NOT share their opinion or perspective unless asked, and then only in at most a succinct form. The whole point of this exercise is about listening and creating safe space in a variety of very public situations, not another chance to express one's own opinions.

Preparing for this activity is vital. Everyone participating should ideally go into it with a spirit of adventure, confidence and creativity, as it takes courage to reach out to strangers about anything. Participants can say they are taking a survey for a summer camp project (or a class project, or whatever seems applicable), and ask if it would be alright to ask a few questions. Some people will say no, but a good number will be open. The response will be completely different than if participants tried to share their opinions. Part of the beauty of this exercise is directly experiencing the power of listening. They will see how it evokes truth in and connections to people.

It is possible that some people will have painful or challenging experiences. That is part of the reason that they should always have a buddy nearby, to go to for support. That is also why reconnecting at the end is so important. It provides excellent time to digest and assimilate the diverse experiences of the group. Also, make sure you state a clear time at which everyone will return to a common point. This is NOT optional. Make sure you have notes on where everyone is going, and that everyone has a clear and easy way to communicate with a 'home base', if their plans or route change, or if, for any reason, they are running late.

**Time: 90 minutes**  
**(30 minutes to prepare,**  
**60 minutes to discuss)**

**Suggested Group Size: any**

**Materials: letter or A3 size paper, crayons,**  
**markers and/or colored pencils.**

## **105. INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS**

How do all the pieces of the puzzle fit together? The larger system, its different institutions and players, social change movements and organizations, families and communities, all are intersecting in various ways. This exercise allows each person to create a representation of how they see the world working and where they see themselves in it. Likely, it will bring up issues of race, class, gender, nationalism, militarism, resistance, hope, regeneration, and more.

Pass out a piece of paper to each person and place colors around the room to share. Invite them to draw an image of how they see the world working now. It can be as a metaphor, if that's an easier way to relate to it. Have them take about 20 minutes to prepare this drawing. Remind them that everyone is an artist, and it's not a competition, but rather a chance to try to represent their understanding of the larger world context in a visual way. There are no right or wrong answers, only each person's authentic perspective.

Then, have them form small groups that are as diverse as possible, with 4-6 people in each group. Ask them to approach their group conversations with both unconditional love and uncompromised truth. Invite them to each share their drawing with the group and discuss together: What do you (the other people in the group) see in my drawing? What did I want to express (if it wasn't the same as what others perceived)? What is the impact of this story about the world on different kinds of people? What is the impact on me? Where am I in this drawing of the system? What would I change in the drawing to reflect a better world? Allow 60 minutes (at least) for discussions in small groups.

# 106. TRUTH MANDALA

Time: 2+ hours

Suggested Group Size: 15-60

**Materials Required:** a medium-sized, smooth stone (at least big enough to fill your hand), dead leaves (at least 15-20 if average sized; they can be attached to a branch but need to be brown already), an empty bowl (ideally, beautiful and simple pottery is best), and a pillow (ideally, red).

This ritual exercise provides a simple, respectful, whole group structure for owning and honoring our pain for the world, and for recognizing the authority and the solidarity it can bring.

People sit in a circle in silence. They sit closely packed together, on pillows that the facilitators set up in advance to insure a 'containment vessel' for holding and cooking the truth. At the center of the circle is an altar, with four quadrants and in each quadrant is placed a symbolic object as described above. In the very center is a pillow. There needs to be enough room in the center for all four objects, and for a person to sit before any of them while comfortably inside the circle. The objects need to be far enough apart that a person can sit on the pillow in the center.

Break the silence with a song, chant or prayer. Then, share some of the key frames for the exercise, including:

- This exercise is significant and powerful; it takes courage and holds richness.
- This is an opportunity to share the feelings we all carry about the state of things in our world. When we keep them inside ourselves, they isolate us. When we share them, they bring us together, awakening our compassion, our courage, our commitment and our capacity to respond.
- Anger is often associated with violence, but it can also be a fuel, a source of power and healing energy. There will probably be some anger expressed as part of this ritual, and it's very important to be clear that this is a space where anger is welcome, so long as it remains non-violent and is not directed at any person.
- This isn't a time for theatrics. This ritual is for each of us and for our world. But what you do, you do because it is true for you, not to impress anyone else.

After these introductions, the facilitator gestures towards each quadrant and towards the object it contains, to explain its meaning.

For example:

"This stone is fear. It's how our heart feels when we're afraid: tight, contracted, hard. In this quadrant we can speak our fear."

"These dry leaves represent our sorrow, our grief, the great sadness within us for what we see happening to our world, our people, our lives."

"This pillow is for anger. There is outrage in us that needs to be spoken, if we are to clear our minds and find our purposes. This pillow represents our anger, and it can also receive our anger if we want to use it that way." Demonstrate hitting the pillow if it seems appropriate, and you are so moved.

"This fourth quadrant, this empty bowl, stands for the lost places, our hunger for what's missing, our meaninglessness and our emptiness.

"You may wonder where hope is. The very ground we sit on is hope. This circle is hope. Our presence together is hope. Our willingness to undertake this work is born of hope. So hope and love are the container that holds us when we open to the feelings, the pain, the anger, the fear, the emptiness we carry. And as we open to these feelings, we open to ourselves, to each other, and to all of humanity. For these feelings are not unique to us. As you will see, they bring us all together."

"We will begin with a dedication and a chant, because this will become holy ground. Nothing makes a place more holy than truth-telling. Then, we will step in one at a time, spontaneously. We will take a symbol in our hands and speak. We can also move from one symbol to another, staying in the mandala for as long as we need to. We may come in more than once or not at all; there is no pressure on anyone to enter. Even if you stay on the periphery, you will find that, as each person enters the mandala, you are in there with them. We will speak briefly. In brevity, words are powerful. No one should ever be in any way violent to the objects on the altar. When you share, see how much you can be in your feelings, letting them flow through you instead of talking about your relationship to them."

them flow through you instead of talking about your relationship to them.”

The facilitator should then enter each quadrant and demonstrate how its symbol can be used for speaking the knowings and feelings we carry. For example, holding the stone of fear, s/he might say, “I’m scared by the militarization of our cities and our nation. I’m scared by the power. How dare they, the people who ought to know better, the people with enough data to see the devastation their choices will wreak upon those alive and still unborn, how dare they play monopoly with our future!”

(Moving to the empty bowl) “I don’t know what to do. I recycle. I speak out. I lead YES! gatherings. But I don’t think it’s enough. Sometimes I feel so empty inside.”

(Moving to the center) “Maybe there’s something you’ll want to say that doesn’t fit one of these quadrants, so the center is a place where you can stand or sit to give voice to it — be it a song, a prayer, or a story.

“Since we are not used to talking like this in public, we need the support of the whole group. After each person has spoken, let us all say, “We hear you.” That’s enough. Your agreement or approval are not needed — just your hearing and respect. And let us pause for three breaths in silence between speakings. Try it now.

(Moving back into the circle) “In the Truth Mandala, we speak not only for ourselves, but for others too. It is the nature of all ritual that it allows us to speak using archetypes — not just as separate individual selves, but on behalf of our people and our Earth.

“When we enter the circle, we will let the ritual object focus our mind. We don’t enter the mandala to perform or explain or report to the rest of us, but to let that object help us voice the truth of our own experience. So while it can be tempting to go just to the center, I urge you to see what feeling is arising, and go to the quadrant that represents that feeling. And if your feeling changes, you can move to a new quadrant. And whenever you are complete, return to the circle.”

Before the ritual formally starts, ask for the group’s commitment to confidentiality: “What is said here, stays here.” Indicate also the duration of time you are giving to the ritual; this helps people to be comfortable with the silences that arise.

The ritual time begins with your formal dedication of the Truth Mandala to the welfare of all beings and the healing of our world. And its proceedings are initiated with a simple change or sounding. The syllable “ah” stands in Sanskrit for all that has been unsaid — and all whose voices have been taken from them, or not yet heard.

Trust yourself to sense the moment to draw the ritual to a close. You will read clues in people’s body language and the energy in the group, or from utterances that seem to provide an appropriate note to end on. Do not expect everyone to take a turn (although there’s nothing wrong with it if people all do, provided it isn’t too large a group). After about an hour or an hour and a half of this ritual, you should be starting to look for a good time to close if you haven’t already, as the intensity can become draining, if it goes on too long.

As you prepare to close, tell people, so that those who have been holding back and waiting to speak can seize the chance to do so. You might say: “The truth-telling will continue in our time together and in our lives, but this chapter of it will draw soon to a close. Let those who have been waiting to come in, enter now and speak.”

The formal closing of the Truth Mandala is a key moment in which to enlarge the group’s understanding of what has transpired. First the guide, speaking generally and on behalf of all, honors the truth that each has spoken and the respectful support that each has given. Truth-telling is like oxygen: It enlivens us. Without it, we grow confused and numb. It is also a homecoming, bringing us back to powerful connection and basic authority.

Then the guide points out the deeper meaning of each quadrant in the mandala.

(Gesturing towards the stone) “For is not the stone also symbolic of the courage that it takes to speak our fear? In hearing fear, we also heard the trust it takes to speak it.”

“And the sorrow spoken over the dead leaves was in equal measure our love. We only mourn what we deeply care for. ‘Blessed are they that mourn.’ Blessed are those who weep for the desecration of life, because, in them, life still burns clear.”

“And the anger we heard, what does it spring from but a passion for justice?”

“The empty bowl is honored too. To be empty means there is space for whatever is, and also for new things to come.”

In facilitating a Truth Mandala, you should keep a few more things in mind:

- As the facilitator, you should also participate. Don't remain aloof, but enter the ritual as honestly and openly as you can, while fulfilling
- Feel free to adapt the workshop to people's needs. In workshops with the elderly, the mandala is set up on a table rather than on the floor; to speak, each participant rises from their chair and stands by a quadrant. Facilitators have even used this in psychiatric wards, but replaced the stone with a vine or a picture.
- Before the ritual starts, ask participants to come into the room and find their seats in silence, so the ritual space is already being created before you start. Also make sure to have the altar already set up, and the cushions in place for the circle, when they arrive in the room.
- While the facilitator may not need to speak in the role of facilitator during the ritual, they should feel free to do so if needed. Be open to coaching people if they seem stuck, distracted, or in any way potentially violent to themselves or objects, using a "yes and" method to guide them if needed. Hold them tenderly with your voice, being kind, gentle, clear, direct and very concise.
- The question to ask in appraising whether or not there's a need for intervention may not be "Do I need to interrupt here?" but more like "Do I need to guide here?" Remember that if you're feeling uncomfortable with the way something is going, other people probably are too.



# RACE, CLASS, GENDER AND POWER

DESPITE OUR GOOD WORK AND BEST INTENTIONS, WE DO STILL LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE ARE JUDGED BY THE COLOR OF THE SKIN, THE SIZE OF THEIR POCKETBOOKS, THE EXPRESSION OF THEIR FEMININITY OR MASCULINITY, THEIR AGE, THEIR POSITION, THEIR DEGREE OR PEDIGREE, AND A WHOLE HOST OF OTHER FACTORS.

WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, IT IS HAPPENING, AND IT IS PART OF ALL OF OUR LIFE'S WORK TO FACILITATE MORE FAIRNESS, UNDERSTANDING, COMPASSION, AND WISDOM ABOUT THE DIFFERENT STRUGGLES WE EXPERIENCE IN OUR DIFFERENT ROLES. THERE CAN BE NO ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHAT IS 'BETTER' OR 'WORSE'. RATHER, EACH PERSON NEEDS SPACE TO NAME WHAT IS TRUE FOR THEM, HOW THEY EXPERIENCE LIFE IN THIS SOCIETY. AND, AS A WHOLE, WE NEED TO LISTEN.

WE ALSO NEED THE SPACE TO NAME WHAT IS TRUE IN OUR GROUP. DYNAMICS CAN AND DO ARISE AMONG US, WHICH MAY BE EXTREMELY CHALLENGING. THESE TOOLS ARE OFFERED TO CREATE SPACE FOR THIS RECOGNITIONS, CONVERSATIONS, HEALING, AND MORE. AS MALIKA SANDERS, A LONG-TIME YES! FACILITATOR HAS SAID, "OUR TIMES CALL FOR UNCOMPROMISED TRUTH AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE." HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR HOLDING SPACE FOR BOTH AT YOUR EVENT.

# UPROOTING RACISM, WORKING FOR JUSTICE: FRAMES & CONTEXT

What follows are a variety of activities for working with a group on racial healing and social justice issues. These activities were primarily created for a U.S. / California-based audience. However, racism and discrimination exist in one form or another in nearly every culture or country. So, we invite you to read through these exercises with the mind to adapt them, as relevant to and necessary for, your particular context.

Some are intended for diverse groups: they should generally work with at least one-third people of color and also at least one-third white people, although these ratios can vary, if the group is fairly strong, resilient and experienced with these issues. Other activities work better for a primarily white group, with less than one-third people of color. If you're working with a diverse group, it is strongly recommended to have representative leadership, so that the leadership team reflects the group constituency.

Some of the activities described here have the potential to touch into deep pains and explosive issues. We ask you to tread with care, caution and consciousness. Make sure you have capable, representative and informed leadership guiding these processes.

It's often said that there is prejudice, and then there is racism. Prejudice is what happens when one person discriminates against another. Racism is what happens when prejudice against a particular population combines with institutionalized power. Think of prisons, environmental injustice, tracking in schools, etc. That's when the whole system is stacked to give unfair privilege to one group of people, at the expense of another. Racism is often described as prejudice plus power.

You may want to begin your conversations with the following statistics to help set a context. They can even be passed around the circle and read by each person, one at a time. Bear in mind that they are sample statements and not appropriate for every context. We included them here, so you could get a sense of what you topics and issues you might research/prepare. However, they are dated and should be checked before being used in your gathering.

## **Social and Environmental Racism:**

- People of color appear in the media as part of crime stories more often than not.
- In San Jose, CA, a white teacher assigned his first-grade students numbers by which they were referred throughout the year, because he said that their names were too hard to pronounce.
- In 2000, the student population of UC-Berkeley was less than 50% white, and yet, 1,457 of the faculty was white, compared to 47 Latinos, 39 African-Americans, 101 Asians, and 5 Native Americans.
- In 2001, a study of ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News and NBC Nightly News showed that 92% of all sources interviewed in the U.S. were white. Only 7% were black, and other groups were even more strikingly underrepresented: with 0.6% of all sources being Latino, 0.6% Arab-American, and 0.2% Asian-American. Out of a total of 14,632 sources, only one was identified as Native American.
- Three out of every five African-Americans and Latinos live in a community with a toxic waste site. This is called environmental racism.

### **Criminal (In)Justice:**

- Young black males make up just 6% of the U.S. population, but 50% of the prison population.
- Three out of every four African-American 18-year-olds living in urban areas can anticipate being arrested and jailed before age 36.
- In Massachusetts, blacks and Hispanics make up 9% of the state's population, but 83% of imprisoned drug offenders.
- African-American teens are more than ten times as likely to be incarcerated in California Youth Authority facilities as white or Asian youth.
- Black juveniles, with no prior jail time, who are charged with a drug offense, are 48 times more likely to be sent to prison than white juveniles charged with the same offense.
- There are now five times as many African-American men in California prisons as there are in California state universities. In 1998, California became the first state in U.S. history to spend more money on prisons than on education.

### **(Lack of) Economic Opportunities**

- Today, the median annual family income for whites is approximately \$47,000, while for African-Americans it's \$26,000.
- Between 1979 and 1989, the number of Latino children living in poverty increased by 33%.
- In 1910, black Americans owned at least 15 million acres of farmland, nearly all of it in the South, according to the U.S. Agricultural Census. Today, they own only 1.1 million acres of farmland and are part-owners of another million acres.
- Black-owned small businesses are more than three times as likely as white-owned ones to have loan applications turned down, despite the same creditworthiness.
- Injustice does not just beset African-Americans. Native Americans, Asian-Americans, Arab-Americans, Latinos, and other people of color also lack access to opportunities that many white households take for granted. For example, the median financial wealth of African Americans (net worth less home equity) is \$200. For Hispanics, it is zero.
- The poverty rate for Hispanics is 2.5 times greater than for whites.
- Less than half of the households on U.S. Native American reservations have phone service.
- The amount of Microsoft stock Bill Gates owned in 1999 was worth twelve times the total amount of all the securities owned by all the 33 million African-Americans combined.
- In the United States as a whole, the richest 1% now earn more per year than the bottom 40% combined.
- In California, the richest 1% now earn more per year than the bottom 60%.
- In California, more than one-third of single mothers live below the poverty line. Nearly two in five Latina women in the state, one in three Native American women, and one in four women of African-American descent, do not have enough food and must skip meals to feed their children.

## (ILL) Health:

- People of color suffer disproportionately from the epidemics that are fueled by excessive meat consumption, such as heart disease, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and cancer.
- The cancer incidence among African-Americans compared to whites in the United States is 26% greater.
- The prostate cancer rate among African-American men compared to white men in the United States is 36% greater.
- The lung cancer incidence among African-Americans compared to whites in the United States is 53% greater.
- The likelihood of an African-American woman dying of breast cancer compared to her Caucasian counterpart is 67% greater.
- The heart disease rate for Hispanic women compared to white women in the United States is double.
- The incidence of obesity among African-American and Mexican-American women compared to white women in the United States is 45% greater.
- The diabetes incidence among Hispanic men compared to white men in the United States is 53% greater.
- The diabetes incidence among African-American men compared to white men in the United States is 69% greater.
- The diabetes incidence among African-American women compared to white women in the United States is more than double.
- The diabetes incidence among Native American women compared to white women in the United States is more than triple.
- Black males have the lowest life expectancy in the United States — 65 and going down.
- Compared to a white child, a black child is 4 times as likely to live in poverty and twice as likely to die in the first year of life.

Along with these statistics, racism affects each one of us deeply. So, in this session, we will look at the collective and, at the same time, very personal impact of racism. And, we will take some steps to learn from each other's experiences, and how we can be part of the healing that is so needed.

We want to share with you some of the learnings from our experiences with race, class and justice exercises over the years. We hope they will be helpful for you, in your own process of facilitation.

1. We need to talk about racism, discrimination, classism, etc., and how it affects us and the people we meet and care about. The conversations can be hard, they can be uncomfortable, but it's vital that we do it. Don't ignore it. The old statement, 'Love sees no color,' has a point: at a core level, we're all human and deserve love. But seeing no color can be used to justify conditions that are killing people and communities. Silence can be the voice of complicity, and to choose to act with love, not just talk about it, means we must see color, and take a stand for a world of justice for all.
2. White folks need to start noticing their whiteness. White society tells many of us that being white is 'normal,' and everyone else is 'other' or 'different,' even though people of color make up the vast majority of the world's population, and will make up the majority of the US population by the middle of the 21st century. As the saying goes, 'men are the only gender that doesn't realize they are one, and European-Americans are the only ethnic group that doesn't realize they are one.'
3. We've seen many people of color expressing tremendous outrage at what they took to be malicious intent on the part of the white community. They find it near impossible to grasp the level of segregation that has enabled many well-intentioned white folks to live in ignorance. Most white folks have a choice about whether or not to notice racism. Most people of color have no such choice – it's in their face every single day. For those white people who have a choice, it can be useful to issue a challenge to make that choice wisely. You might say something like, "From this day on, make a commitment to notice racism, even if it makes you or others in your life uncomfortable. Notice when you receive preferential treatment that is not given to people of color, even if it's subtle. When renting a house or apartment, or getting a loan, or getting a job,

consider: Would a person of color have been given this opportunity? I challenge you to live with this awareness in your mind and heart, so that you can recognize when white privilege shows up, and so each observation of injustice deepens your commitment to use your life to create a more just world.”

4. Most white folks don't feel privileged. Many feel pissed off at the world and angry or forlorn about ways they have felt themselves hurt, their dreams trampled, their hopes dashed. This is real, and there's no need to invalidate anyone's pain when you shine light on someone else's. In fact, the simple reality that we've all been through our hardships can be a linking point, a point of connection that builds empathy. It is crucial that all people have safe spaces in which to share their struggles, their dreams, their truth and their commitments. The following exercises should be used in the service of liberation for all beings, not for turning the tables of oppression from one group to another. Whatever you do, do not take sides or make assumptions. And, do not reinforce a 'victim-oppressor' dynamic.

5. To make a gross generalization, we've observed that many communities of color have a strong sense of the collective, while many white folks have grown up in a much more individualistic context. In many discussions, people of color have spoken of 'you', meaning white folks, but not specifically the white people in the room. The white people in the room may take offense at such statements as, "You dragged us from our homes and sold us into slavery," not realizing that it's not meant as an individual or personal attack. There's a profound cultural richness that comes from looking out for the community, as marginalized groups have often had to do simply to survive — a richness that creates a closeness and a common bond many white people feel jealous of when they realize it's there. This can often highlight the need for community that we all feel, and that is so often unmet in white, middle-class North America.

6. One danger in following exercises is people of color feeling put on the spot, to either try to defend themselves, or to prove that racism exists (or both). They can't try to represent their race, and officially need to be freed from that expectation. You might say something like, "No one here is representing their race or culture. We all represent ourselves, and the commitments we bring to life. That's it. Whether good or bad, we cannot take the actions of one person as representative of anything more than themselves."

7. Another danger is 'white guilt'. Some folks who have been on the privileged end of the spectrum may feel guilt come up at one point or another. This does not serve any of us. Guilt can actually be like an addiction; it's a way of coping with the distress about what we're learning, but with its own vicious cycle of complacency. It gets us off the hook from actually doing anything constructive. The forces of injustice are happy to see privileged folks feeling guilty, because that doesn't threaten the way things are going in the slightest. Aware, self-confident partners, on the other hand, can be a real force of change and justice.

8. One last suggestion is to set proper expectations and boundaries before you begin. You might say something like, "This not about 'solving' it all, but it's a piece of the puzzle. For some, it is a starting point; for others, a middle point, but for all of us, it is a point of entry. In this moment, in this group, we are not going to heal the relationships between all races everywhere. But, we can better understand ourselves and each other, and how our friends here in this circle have been affected by institutionalized racism. It's also that it's just about 'me'. Everything shared here also has a larger intention: To support our capacity to build bridges of solidarity across the lines of separation, and to enable us to take a more powerful stand, together, for justice. We want to see where we've picked up baggage, armor, and dirt on our windows that clouds our view, so we can begin to release that which hurts us and the people we care about. Also, please remember that when we clean our windows, our junk can splatter on someone else. Let's each exercise care in our actions and, together, we will make our way."

# UPROOTING RACISM, WORKING FOR JUSTICE: ACTIVITIES

## 107. THE HEART EXERCISE

Adapted from TODOS Institute  
Time: 45 minutes  
Suggested group size: 15+

Ask participants to envision a new-born baby. Have them freely call out qualities of that baby, and write their responses up on poster paper or chalk board. You'll probably hear things like, 'innocent', 'sweet', 'dependent', 'noisy', 'trusting', etc.

The facilitator draws a heart around the list and says, "This is how we come into this world. Everyone, regardless of race or gender or class or anything else, is born like this. But, then, what are some things that are said to young people that can hurt them and take away that innocence?" The group might respond with things like, 'Shut up and do what you're told' or 'You're just a kid and don't know anything', etc. The facilitator then draws a scar (a little black X or slash) on the heart for each of them. If you want to stimulate more ideas, you can ask: "What gets said when the child is a girl? To children whose skin is darker than 'white'? To children who limp, or stutter?" Draw more scar-marks for each of these things. "Human beings bruise very easily. Each of these words and remarks leaves a bruise. Each bruise develops a little scar. By the time we're adults, we have lots of scars." Draw three or four concentric arcs over the scarred heart. And then ask: "What else happens when a person gets a scar? That person tries to keep herself from being hurt the next time. She puts up a shield to protect herself. One shield for every scar. When a person puts up many shields, it makes it very hard for the heart to grow. It becomes frozen in place, holding up all of its shields."

Refer to the remarks that participants previously called out and have participants call out particular behaviors — shields — that young people use to protect themselves. For example, if an adult tells a young person to "Shut up!", that person might learn to be silent around adults. Or, if being told "You're just a kid," a young person might learn either to act very young all the time or, alternatively, to act very mature and never let himself appear his own age. Ask participants: "What are some examples of ways people might create armor to protect themselves from being hurt? What are some ways you've done it?" Point out that some people's armor is defensive, and some people's armor is also offensive. Some people so want to keep from getting hurt again that they hurt others first.

Now, the facilitator should draw another heart with lots of "scars" and "shields," next to the original. S/he then says, "When two people meet, each finds it very hard to see the real person behind the shields, much less let themselves be seen. When you say something to me, it has to go through all of your shields before it even gets out, so it may come out sounding different than you intended. Then it has to get through all my armor, so by the time I hear it, it doesn't sound anything like what you intended. We often start fighting, just because we have both been bruised so much and hold up so many shields that we don't know how to talk to or listen to one another. When you think about it, it's a miracle that we ever actually communicate with each other at all.

Remember, our old shields can keep us from growing. They might be helpful sometimes, but we need to be able to put them down. Every time you can safely put a shield down, there's that much more room for your heart to grow.

It's important to see people for the heart inside, not the armor. Remember that everyone came into this world as a precious human, and when we treat them like that, we help them to be who they really are. We are the hearts, not the walls."

Invite the group to share more feelings and perspectives on their heart, scars and shields. This is only an opening, to set the context, and should be followed by some of the other activities.

# 108. THE CLASS-RACE EXERCISE

Originally adapted from Paul Kivel and Martin Cano  
Time: 1.5-3 hours

This exercise can bring up a lot for people. It takes a look at the impact that prejudice and racism have had on our lives, and on the privileges given to some and not to others. Throughout the exercises in this section, you may want to remind participants that we all came in beautiful and whole and complete. The purpose of this work is to grow in awareness and real understanding of each other, and to take some steps towards healing wounds and being allies. You can't do something about a problem without recognizing it, even if seeing it is painful. With this and all the exercises we do, notice any feelings and memories that might come up, and please stay with it. Feelings are okay. Tears are okay. Anger is okay. Just notice what comes up, and stay with it, knowing we're in this together, and we'll come out the other side of it together.

Everyone starts out on a line, in the middle of a large room, facing one wall. There should be ample space behind them and in front of them. The exercise can also be done outside. Participants are told that they are at the starting line for a race to get a seven-figure salary with a private jet, a limo, four secretaries, and lots of power, or, in other words, our society's materialistic dream of success. This will likely not be what your group's vision of success is, but ask them to work with the archetype, and we'll have time to question/criticize it later.

Once they have lined up and are ready, let them know that they're going to have to make some adjustments before the race. The facilitator is going to read some statements, and participants are asked to silently take a step forward or backward depending upon the instructions given. Each person should decide for themselves if the statement applies, and, as much as possible, keep their steps the same size throughout the exercise.

Before you begin, you might say something like, "This is not a yardstick of pain. It is a tool for exploring how our society has privileged some of us at the expense of others, but, by absolutely no means, does where you end up on this continuum exemplify how easy or hard your life has been.

The activity is designed to bring up feelings or memories, including times you or people you care about have been marginalized, targeted, hurt or discriminated against. Some of the statements might be painful. That's okay. Stay with it, keep breathing, try not to shut down, and we'll talk about it and process it together afterwards. Facing the injustice is vital to changing it.

There's nothing wrong with you if you find yourself moving forward — or backward — as we go along. None of us are responsible for the ways that our society has given unfair advantages to some at the expense of others. The injustice hurts all of us, in our own unique ways. We're looking at it from one angle, because that can serve our growing awareness and motivation to constructive action. There can be a tendency to glorify those behind you and dislike those in front of you. But adding judgements to our feelings does not serve any of us.

Lastly, this exercise will most likely be uncomfortable for all of us. That's okay. Stay with it. It's okay to look around, breathe, notice how you're feeling, and keep remembering, as you look around, that these are your friends."

The facilitators should read the following statements loudly and clearly. The rest of the group should remain in silence and not make any comments during the process.

1. If your ancestors were forced to come to this country or forced to relocate from where they were living, either temporarily or permanently, or restricted from living in certain areas, take one step back.
2. If your parent or parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step back.
3. If you feel that your primary ethnic identity is "American", take one step forward.
4. If you were ever called names, or ridiculed because of your race, ethnicity or class background, take one step back.
5. If you grew up with people of color, or working class people, who were servants, maids, gardeners, or babysitters in your house, take one step forward.

6. If you were ever embarrassed or ashamed of your clothes, your house or your family car, when growing up, please take one step back.
7. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or other professionals, take one step forward.
8. If you consistently felt your dreams and spirit affirmed by one of your parents, take one step forward. If you consistently felt your dreams and spirit affirmed by both of your parents, take another step forward.
9. If you ever felt consistently unsafe or threatened around one of your parents, take one step back. If you felt consistently unsafe or threatened around both of your parents, take another step back.
10. If either of your parents has been addicted to alcohol or drugs in your life, take a step back.
11. If either of your parents has been emotionally or mentally unstable, take a step back.
12. If one or both of your parents regularly beat you, take a step back.
13. If one or both your parents regularly shamed, ridiculed or criticized you, take two steps back.
14. If pimping, prostitution, drugs or other illegal activities were a major occupational alternative in the community where you were raised, take one step back.
15. If you ever tried to change your physical appearance, mannerisms, language or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed take one step back.
16. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.
17. If you started school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
18. If your family had more than fifty books in the house when you were growing up, take one step forward.
19. If you ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry, because there wasn't enough money to buy food, take one step back.
20. If you were taken to art galleries, museums, or plays by your parents, take one step forward.
21. If one of your parents was ever laid off, unemployed, or underemployed not by choice, take one step back.
22. If you ever attended to a private school or summer camp take one step forward.
23. If you received less encouragement in academics or sports from your family or from teachers because of your gender, take one step back.
24. If you were told by your parents that you were beautiful, smart, and capable of achieving your dreams, take two steps forward.
25. If you've ever struggled with dyslexia, take a step back.
26. If you are or ever have been physically or mentally handicapped or disabled in a significant and long term way, take a step back.
27. If you or your family ever had to move because there wasn't enough money to pay the rent, take one step back.
28. If you were told by your parents that because you were beautiful, pretty or good-looking, then therefore what you thought or did wasn't important, take one step back.
29. If you were ever discouraged or prevented from pursuing academic or work goals, or tracked into a lower level because of your race, class or ethnicity, take one step back.
30. If your parent or parents encouraged you to go to college, take one step forward.
31. If you were ever given less support than the boys in your family for going to college or pursuing work goals because of your gender, take one step back.
32. If you grew up in a single parent household, take one step back.
33. If, prior to your 18th birthday, you took a vacation outside of your home state, take one step forward.
34. If you have a parent who did not complete high school, take one step back.
35. If your parent or parents owned their own house through a majority of your childhood, take one step forward.
36. If you commonly see people of your race or ethnicity on television or in movies in roles that you consider to be degrading, take one step back.
37. If you ever got a good paying job or a promotion because of a friend or family member, take one step forward.
38. If you were ever denied a good-paying job or promotion, and you believed it was because of your race or ethnicity, take one step back.
39. If you were ever denied a job, paid less for comparable work, or had less qualified people promoted over you because of your gender, take



40. If, as a white person, you ever worked in a job where people of color held more menial jobs, were paid less or were otherwise harassed or discriminated against, take one step forward.
41. If you ever were paid less, treated less fairly, or given harder work than a white person in a similar position because of your race or ethnicity, take one step back.
42. If you were ever unfairly mistrusted or accused of stealing, cheating or lying by someone in a position of power over you, take one step back.
43. If you ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
44. If you primarily use public transportation to get where you need to go, take one step back.
45. If you generally think of the police as people that you can call on for help in times of emergency, take one step forward.
46. If you have ever been stopped by police because of your race, ethnicity or class, take one step back.
47. If you ever felt afraid of violence towards you, because of your race, class, gender, or sexual preference, take one step back.
48. If, as your sexual identity emerged, you ever doubted your society's willingness to let you legally marry your future spouse, take a step back.
49. If, in general, you avoid those communities that you consider dangerous, take one step forward.
50. If you ever feared for your safety, or for the safety of your family or friends, because of consistent gunshots or violence in your neighborhood, take one step back.
51. If you ever felt uncomfortable or angry about a remark or joke about your race, gender, sexual preference or ethnicity, but didn't feel safe to confront it, take one step back.
52. If you or your close friends or family were ever a victim of violence, because of your race or ethnicity, take one step back.

After the last statement, ask everyone to freeze in place, look around, and notice where they are and where everyone else is. What patterns do they notice?

Then people are told that they are in a race to the front wall for that seven-figure salary and all the benefits that come with it. Second place gets a six-figure salary. They should imagine that they need a good job to support themselves or their family. At the count of three, they should run towards that wall (or goalpost) as fast as they can. The first few to the front wall will get the best jobs. Quickly say, "Ready, set, go," to start the race. After the race, gather the whole group in a comfortable place for a discussion.

The facilitators should begin by asking the group, "How are you feeling? How was that for you? Notice any memories or experiences that came up. There may also be questions you wanted to see added – ways that you've experienced oppression or discrimination that were not listed. That's okay. Just keep breathing, feeling, noticing. Now, let's pair up and talk for a few minutes about whatever feelings came up during this exercise." The facilitators can either have them pair up with someone near them in the continuum, someone far from them in the continuum, or just whoever they like. Have the pair talk about how it was, what they noticed, how they felt, what memories surfaced, and how they're feeling now. Make sure that each pair gives a turn for both people to talk.

Then, bring the whole group back together and facilitate a discussion in which people can share what came up, how they're feeling, and what this all means. This discussion may become intense. The exercise can raise issues of individual achievement, a 'level playing field', affirmative action, and the different reactions people have to an unequal system. For example, given where they started the race from, how did that affect how hard they ran toward the goalpost? Did they run at all?

Some people may also be a bit numb afterwards, and if this is the case, you may want to help them make space for wherever they are. Invite them to 'thaw' the places that may have frozen up, by remembering that they are among friends. If things become intense, one format that can hold space for intense discharging, in a relatively safe context, is the Truth Mandala.

**Variation:**

This can add another one hour to the conversation, but can be good for adding complexity and valuing life experiences differently. It is especially important if people feel stereotyped or that the game was too predictable. The facilitator should divide the large group into several smaller groups of 5-7 people each. Ask each group to come up with their own definition of 'success'. Once they've agreed upon something, then

then ask them to come up with their own statements for moving forward or backward that links to this success. For example, if 'success' is defined as the ability to grow one's own food and be self-sustainable, then you might step forward if you have had experiences with physical labor, and you might step backward if you have a Ph.D. Ask the groups to prepare 10 statements. Then, invite the groups to come back together, and play their version of the race.

With each race, notice who comes out where and how people feel. As a whole group, invite more dialogue around 'success' and the value of diverse life experiences. What might it take to broaden our societal vision of success? If you have participants from other cultures/communities, ask them to share any alternative views on 'success' that come from their contexts.

## 109. RACISM STAND-UP

**Time: 1 hour**  
**Suggested group size: 15+**

This activity is best done with a diverse group and is good to have in your 'tool-kit', to pull out when it seems appropriate or necessary. It shows the pervasiveness of the mistreatment of people of color and is often an eye-opener for white people in the group.

The facilitator should seat the group in a circle. State that you are going to lead an exercise which will show the pervasiveness of racism and how it affects all of us, personally and collectively. Tell participants that you will read to them a number of statements, and that they should stand if the statement applies to them. Tell them to simply notice their feelings, memories or thoughts throughout the exercise.

For each question, people are to notice who is standing, who is sitting, and to feel their own reactions to the statement and their observations. Invite them to remember the beautiful babies we all were when we started out, the hearts inside everyone, and ask them to hold the people standing and sitting in their heart and care. Ask everyone to do this exercise in silence. Tell them that if they don't want to stand when something applies to them, that's okay. Ask them to simply be honest with themselves and notice what they feel.

Common reactions from people of color include: relief that they are not alone in their experience; anger at the pervasiveness of racism and the insulation of white people, and upset at the separation between the communities. White people have often responded with shock, guilt or embarrassment, for never having known what people of color have faced. We mention this, not to typecast people, but just so the facilitators can prepare for all possible reactions.

Before you begin, make it clear that everyone's feelings and experiences are okay. Let the group know that this exercise can help build a deepened sense of safety for both people of color and white people. Explain that this exercise shows some of the mistreatment of people of color. This does not mean that whites have not been hurt too, or that all whites have been 'guilty' of creating these injustices. It does mean, though, that the people in the room have been through some intense experiences, and that those experiences are not unique to individuals. By exploring the things we've been through personally, we can become more awakened to what's happening collectively and enhance our own ability to respond.

Then, choose some of these items to read. Start with the ones that are likely easiest for people to disclose first, and then build up to the ones that may be more emotional or revealing. Read each statement slowly and clearly, allowing about 10 seconds after everyone has stood for them to remain there, then gently say: "Thank you" as an indication for them to sit down again.

"Stand up silently if you have ever..." (repeat this phrase each time)

- 1) Been called names because of your ethnicity.
- 2) Heard jokes told about members of your group.
- 3) Been treated unfairly by teachers or counselors in school because of your ethnicity.
- 4) Seen other members of your ethnic group mistreated.
- 5) Heard stories of mistreatment from your family because of ethnicity.
- 6) Been the target of violence because of your ethnicity.

- 7) Felt out of place because of your ethnicity.
- 8) Been told you weren't good enough or couldn't do something because of your ethnicity.
- 9) Felt alone or uncomfortable in a group because you were the only person of your ethnicity.
- 10) Heard others told, or been told yourself, to go back where you came from.
- 11) Been told that you are not like, or do not act like, the other people of your ethnic group.
- 12) Been stopped by the police or other authority because they said you 'looked suspicious.'
- 13) Tried to change how you look or speak for fear of being put down for being of your ethnicity.
- 14) Had a white person come up to you assuming you speak a language other than English.
- 15) Been followed around suspiciously in a store.

After the statements have been read, break into pairs for participants to process any thoughts or feelings that came up for them in the exercise. Then, return to a big group circle. Have a larger group discussion on what people are feeling now. Remember to listen and ask others to listen as well. This is a time for learning, not judgement, neither of oneself or of each other. Remind everyone that honesty is good. Invite them to hold all people's sharing with an open heart, always seeing the heart behind the 'armor'.

## 110. CULTURAL AWARENESS DIALOGUE

Time: Will vary  
Suggested group size: any

These questions can be used in a go-around format, where each person answers, one-by-one, or in a popcorn-style discussion, where anyone speaks when they feel called to do so..

- 1) What has been your experience with racism?
- 2) Can you think of a time that you did something to interrupt racism?
- 3) For whites: What does it mean to you to support anti-racism work? What has been your experience working with people of color?
- 4) For people of color: What does it mean to you to support anti-racism work? What has been your experience working in coalition with whites/ European-Americans?
- 5) Are there members of your family who feel differently than you do about racism issues? How so? Has that been challenging for you?

# 111. PREJUDICE IN THE FLESH

**Time: An afternoon of free-time + 90 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: 15-80**  
**Materials: wristbands or tags**  
**in three different colors, in sufficient quantity**

Please note that this is most valuable with an ethnically and/or economically diverse group. Only do it if you feel the group can handle more intensity. It belongs towards the middle or end of a gathering.

Start by explaining that this is an intense exercise, and it requires everyone's full cooperation. Divide the group into three equal-sized 'classes', or categories, based on eye color. They can be indicated by the color of wrist-band people are given. For example, brown-eyed people get blue wrist bands and will be upper class; green-eyed people get red wristbands and will be middle class, and blue-eyed people get yellow wristbands and will be lower class.

Explain that the blue-eyes (or the white skins, if you're using race) are least important. They cannot look anyone other than their own group members in the eyes. They cannot speak to anyone outside of their group unless spoken to. They must do what any superior says, and they have no rights. If they're playing in a field, and a superior comes, they must leave the area, unless commanded to stay. The green-eyes (or brown skins) are superior to the blue eyes, but inferior to the brown eyes (or black skins), who are most important. The wristbands/tags should be kept clearly visible and must stay on until the exercise is completed.

The rules cannot be broken, and people cannot go off alone — they need to stay in the area and are asked to interact with others within this system. A facilitator or two can be the police, and they have the authority to take any blue or green-eyed person off to jail (a tree, picnic table or room) for an assigned length of time (5-10 minutes). This authority should not be excessively abused — it's primarily just for occasions in which a more important person complains about a less important person. The police can also intervene if any less important person is being hurt in any way — which is absolutely unacceptable. All people must obey the police. If things start getting dull (which is unlikely), the police can harass or interrogate less important people.

This exercise continues for about two hours (potentially right through a lunch break), and is followed by the facilitators calling everyone together and inviting them to remove their wristbands. Then, a discussion takes place. The facilitator asks a question, and anyone who wants to can answer it. Allow a few answers, and maybe even a little discussion, and then move on to the next question.

- a) Were any of you surprised by what happened?
- b) Did any of this relate to things any of you have experienced in the real world?
- c) How did it feel, greens and browns, to be more important than other people?
- d) How did it feel, greens and blues, to be less important than other people?
- e) Does anyone here want to share any stories of experiencing racism or classism first-hand?
- f) How does oppression play out in terms of environmental issues?
- g) What can be done to uproot institutionalized oppression in terms of economics?
- h) How do prejudice barriers affect us in our daily lives?
- i) Who here has ever done something, directly, to stop racism or classism? What have you done?
- j) Does any one here want to make any commitments or pledges for themselves relative to oppression? Do you want to commit to doing something about it?

Make the point that oppression hurts the 'oppressor' as well as the 'oppressed'. Also, express that racism isn't just about prejudice, or certain individuals disliking other individuals; it's also about institutions and economics. There is no such thing as 'reverse racism', because racism isn't just between individuals, it's in society as a whole. There is such a thing as prejudice, from any skin color to any other skin color. Prejudice in any direction helps fuel racism.

# 112. AWARENESS TO ACTION

Time: 20-30 minutes

Suggested Group Size: 2-100

Materials: a copy per participant of the Personal Action Plan (written below)

This activity helps conclude a discussion on racism on a positive note and encourages participants to further their learning and take action. It helps participants identify specific ways in which they can take action to combat discrimination. And, it empowers participants to further their own education and to create change.

1. **Frame the exercise:** Remind participants that each of us is responsible for eliminating the discrimination around us. To do this, we each need to set up an action plan.
2. **Create an action plan:** Pass out copies of the Personal Action Plan (below) and tell the group that they each have about ten minutes to answer the questions by themselves.
3. **Share the action plans:** Ask participants to pair up and discuss their action plan with their partner. You can let them self-organize, as different people will finish at different times.
4. **Close the conversation:** When the pairs have completed their discussion, bring the whole group back together for debriefing. Ask them: "Does anyone want to share how that was for them? Or what they came up with?" End by encouraging them to work to accomplish every item on their worksheet.

## PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Fighting racism is difficult work and requires a plan of action. This worksheet helps you identify specific actions you can take to help further your own education and create change in your community.

1. Information I plan to seek out to further my understanding of racism:
2. A topic of conversation I would like to have with my friends, colleagues or family:
3. The ethnic groups I feel I still need to gain a great deal of knowledge about:
4. Events or activities I plan to participate in to increase my understanding of ethnic groups:
5. An action I can take (through a leadership position, organization or project) to enhance ethnic/race relations in my school, organization or community:

# 113. MONEY SECRETS

Time: 45-60 minutes

Suggested Group Size: 4-6

Materials: pens and notecards

This exercise was developed for use with groups of people exploring class privilege, but it can be a useful for many diverse groups.. Before you divide into small groups, you may want to frame the activity with the following:

- 1) Money is a taboo subject for a lot of people, and we want to make space for us to talk about it.
- 2) We'll be doing an exercise that is anonymous, but is meant to push you further. Take a risk!
- 3) Remember, what you say here, stays here, and what you put out is what you get out.

Break into small groups of 4-6 for about 20 minutes. Each small group needs a facilitator. Small group facilitators need 3 notecards per per-

Break into small groups of 4-6 for about 20 minutes. Each small group needs a facilitator. Small group facilitators need 3 notecards per person and one pen per person, along with an instruction sheet listing the questions they are to ask.

Small group facilitators: Your goal is to give each participant in your small group the opportunity to actively listen and honestly share their experiences. It is not to enter in an overarching discussion, but is meant to be a more intimate exchange. Ask the first question, and give each person in your group an opportunity to answer, going around the circle. Then, go on to the next question.

- When you were young, what were some of the messages your parents gave you about money? For example, “A penny saved is a penny earned.” What were their attitudes towards money?
- Which of these messages/attitudes have you integrated into your own life? Why? Which of them have you let go of or changed? Why?
- Remember the first time you ever felt guilty or ‘bad’ in relationship to money. If you are comfortable, share the memory with the group.

After the questions, pass out three pieces of paper to each person. In silence, ask them to write down three different secrets related to money. These should be anonymous and written as ‘I’ statements. For example:

- I spent \$500 on shoes, which I don’t want to my friends to know about.
- I am in debt and don’t know how I will pay rent this month.
- I don’t know where my money is invested.

When they’ve finished writing their secrets, they place them in a hat or basket in the center of the room (a common pile for all the groups).

Now, come back to the big group. Pass the hat or basket of ‘money secrets’ around the room. Each participant fishes one out, reads it aloud, and then passes it to the next person to do the same. Keep the room quiet while the secrets are being read; encourage participants to refrain from laughter or comments. Ask them to just take in the diversity of secrets and notice their own reactions.

You can keep going around the circle until all the secrets have been read, or save some of them to be read at the start of future sessions. Whatever you decide, be sure to build in some time for debriefing after the first time you read the secrets. Invite popcorn-style sharing, which means you share when you are ready, and offer the following questions to stimulate the dialogue:

- 1) How was that for you? What did you notice or feel in listening?
- 2) How did it feel to write down your secrets?
- 3) What do you think is the worst thing that could happen if you told this secret?
- 4) What do you think is the best thing that could happen if you told this secret?
- 5) Who benefits from your secrets being kept?

Sometimes, people in the group do end up taking ownership of their ‘secrets’, and an even richer healing and discussion can occur. Don’t force, but invite people to release what they need to and ask for the support they need in the process.

# 114. STORIES OF GENEROSITY

**Time: 30-60 minutes,**  
**depending on the size of the group**  
**Suggested Group Size: any number**

Sometimes, it is important to have space to reflect both on the gifts we have given and the ones that we have received in our lives. Gifts can be anything of significance — time, money, attention, love, kindness, awareness, knowledge, etc. Generosity and reciprocity — a sharing and exchanging of these gifts — is part of what makes humanity flow. It ties together social relationships and makes social change happen.

This activity lets us see and name ourselves as ‘philanthropists’, in the core definition of the word, ‘lovers of humanity’. Simultaneously, it lets us take a look at ourselves as ‘beneficiaries’, those who have been on the receiving end of others’ generosity. The activity is good for challenging the prevailing class-based notions of these ideas; it opens up the conversations more broadly and deeply. On one side, it is totally empowering, as we realize that we already have practiced leveraging our gifts to make a difference in peoples’ lives. On the other side, it is profoundly humbling, as we see how different people have contributed to our lives in special ways. The sum effect is a reminder of our own capacities and a deep feeling of gratitude.

Depending on the size of the group, and the time that you have, you can stay together as a whole group, or break into smaller groups. There will be two go-arounds in the circle(s). First: Share a specific story/experience in which you were the receiver of someone’s generosity. Second: Share a specific story/experience in which you were generous to someone. In both cases, the person should tell a story. It should be a particular event, not a general feeling or conceptual idea. This will keep the timing tight, around 1-2 minutes per person, and will thus keep the go-around lively and engaging. It’s often nice to follow this conversation with a free-write, or another opportunity to more deeply consider how to direct one’s own gifts, resources and capacities towards making a difference.

## FOCUS ON GENDER: BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP WORLD

**Time: 4-16 hours**  
**Suggested Group Size: 10-40**

The following series of exercises require intensive facilitating and a rigorous guarding of safe space. They should be co-facilitated by (at least) one male and one female. Make sure you have the entire day open and that people are feeling connected and energized before going into it. It has, upon occasion, been done in an evening, starting at 7 PM and running potentially as late as 2 AM, with follow-up morning sessions, if things haven’t been completed. But ideally, you would start in the morning and afternoon, keeping the evening available if necessary.

This day can open up some powerful stuff for people. What you start here, you need to finish. People need not to experience not just openness, but also closure and resolution. Co-facilitators need to understand, plan and prepare for this day thoroughly in advance. Make sure you feel comfortable holding an emotionally safe space for everyone.

Also, pay attention to your context. There are many cultural and regional differences when it comes to gender, and it is important to be sensitivity to this diversity. The following activities were conceived of and worked through with a US-audience first, and then adapted for a more international audience. As facilitators, read through them carefully, and be ready to adapt them to your specific context/cultural realities.

Also, if someone’s on psychiatric drugs, or if you have a distinct sense that they might have a hard time with the intensity of the experience, connect with them beforehand to discuss their participation and how appropriate it is.

Invite all of the participants to take care of themselves today; drink plenty of water, use the bathroom when needed, and eat well. Before

you begin, ensure that the participants have been well-energized, to release any fidgety or excessive energy. Then, slowly bring them to the level of focus and intensity that you need.

The conversations around gender work best as a whole day. You may find completion by the end of the afternoon, but should be willing to move into the evening as necessary. The format described below is one way of proceeding, but we have also gone straight into the fishbowls without the gender-separated discussions. Other variations can work as well.

The topic of sexual abuse is likely to be brought up during this day, usually by one of the participants sharing her/his own experience. It is important that the atmosphere be supportive and safe. One person sharing her/his experience may trigger within others the memory of their own sexual abuse. The experiences shared can invoke valuable healing and bonding. The final outcome could be immeasurably worthwhile. However, it is also important not to push the sharing of sexual abuse. If it doesn't feel appropriate, it doesn't need to happen.

Another issue that is likely to raise its head for the women is body image. This one may not be as intense as sexual abuse but its impact on self-esteem and self-image is not to be overlooked. You will also likely hear stories of eating disorders.

The men may have feelings of guilt, shame or defensiveness arise, as well as the physical or psychological abuse that many of them have experienced. Many may carry wounds from having women lash out at them, projecting past pain with men onto people who were not responsible for it. The most potent and, at times, volatile issue that often arises for men is pain with their own fathers. A stunning percentage of men have painful relationships with their fathers. Many men may also carry pain and/or shame around pornography, difficulty contacting their emotions, gang violence they've been involved with, or ways they have hurt others. Homosexuality may also come up, in terms of fears, judgements and experiences. As facilitator, your most important job is to hold the circle and everyone's sharing with honesty and love, and to be fierce and kind in your protection of safe space.

Also, the series of activities is based on separating into gender groups, and not all people identify entirely with one gender or the other. It can be helpful to acknowledge this fact, and to ask people to work with whatever gender identity most fits for them, for the purposes of the day, and that we will create space for them to share their experiences and stories, however they see fit.

## **115. GENDER DAY ACTIVITIES**

### **Overview of the Day**

1. Introduction to the Day
2. Statistics and Setting the Context
3. Males and Females Separate into Small Groups
4. Fishbowl Explanation
5. Focus on Women: Stand Up and Fishbowl
6. Lunch Break
7. Focus on Men: Stand Up and Fishbowl
8. All Group Dialogue
9. What We Want From Each Other
10. Songs and Final Sharing



## Day in Detail

### 1) Introduction and Framing:

The whole group gathers, seated in a circle. The males and females should be mixed throughout the circle. Start off with a full-length tune-in. For some groups, it might be nice to begin the day with a song.

*Note: What follows is written as you might say it. Feel free say it in your own words.*

“Have you ever known someone who you could never please? Someone who could make a lemon out of lemonade and find the dark cloud in every silver lining? These people are convinced that the world is so messed up. But, imagine that this person is looking at the world through their window, like we all do. Now, suppose that their window is dirty, but they don't know that it's dirty. They might just think that the world is dirty! Instead of cleaning their own window, so that they can see the world more clearly, they just blame the world.

Of course, that could never happen to you or I, could it? The media likes to claim that it doesn't shape people values and beliefs, but does it? Yes or no? (Let them respond). You bet. That's why, every year, advertisers spend *billions* of dollars smudging up your window, to convince you that you really need their products.

The other side is how we see people through our own dirt. If someone's window is dirty, and we look at them from out on the street, how will they seem? They will look dirty through their own window. It's like meeting someone with 'racist dirt'. Instead of seeing the beautiful and worthy soul that they are, we see a 'racist', we see dirt. But, let me ask you, does that ever lead to peace? (*Let them answer.*) Does seeing people, as the dirt on their window help them clean it? (*Let them answer.*) We all know that it doesn't work.

We all carry dirt on our windows, and the first step to cleaning it off is seeing that it's there. That's not always easy. (Consider sharing a quick story of uncovering some of your own dirt.) It can be painful to know that we have been seeing people and life in such destructive ways, but the beauty is that when we get to wash our windows, the whole world will look brighter. Today is about exploring where that dirt might be, in terms of how we see men, how we see women, and how we see ourselves. It's about beginning the process of cleaning it off.

Throughout the day, it's important to remember that we are not the dirt on the windows. We are separate from that. So, if you 'feel some dirt' inside yourself, or 'hear some dirt' from others, this is not the time to judge it. We are bringing the darkness up into the light, so that it can be healed. It's not easy for us to admit that we have such huge chunks of dirt within us. It can be a vulnerable time. So, I want to emphasize the concept of safe space. This is a time to really hold people in your heart as they are sharing and to know that there is a beautiful person on the other side of the glass.”

Explain that this exercise can be quite intense, and no one has to participate if s/he doesn't feel up to the emotions which could be triggered. However, ask that anyone who does start, stay through to the end. It is vital that no one leave the room except at designated breaks. Even though things may get uncomfortable, participants need to stay with it. That doesn't mean anyone will ever be required to speak if they don't want to, just that they'll remain present with the process. Ask for that commitment from everyone.

Also explain that even if the process becomes intense or heated, there is no need to panic. While we may go deep, it is also safe and will ultimately make the whole group wiser, closer and more understanding of one another. It's an opportunity for a lot of healing.

Remind people to the commitment to confidentiality, and invite everyone to feel free to ask for additional confidentiality before or after saying anything particularly significant to them. Ask everyone to give their full respect to the process and to the other participants, so as to create a safe space. Make it clear that this process is about supporting each other, not judging each other. If they need to pass, they can pass, and they are invited to share as deeply as possible.

Other frames to incorporate include:

**MEDIA'S IMPACT ON SELF-WORTH:** You might comment on the media's role in influencing us to see ourselves as faulty or less than others.

**YIN & YANG:** "This day is not just about men and women, but also about masculine and feminine energies and qualities in our world and in our lives."

**HOMOSEXUALITY:** Remember that about 10% of the population is gay or bi-sexual, and that almost certainly includes some people in the room. It's easy for people who are heterosexual to talk in a way that assumes that others are and, in the process, to be alienating to some people. The facilitator might say something like, "Whatever your personal experience, this is a place where everyone is welcome and where each person will be treated with respect and support. So, please don't assume you know what a person's sexual identity is unless they've told you, and please make space for each person's uniqueness."

**INTENSITY:** "This day can bring up some serious issues. It can be a very intense day. We ask for your commitment, your focus and your caring. Please take care of yourself and each other along the way, both in terms of emotional needs, as well as bathroom, water and food needs."

**CHOICE:** "No one is forced to share. It is your choice."

**SUPPORT:** "We're here to support, not judge."

**INVITATION FOR DEPTH:** "This day and this process is an invitation to share deeply and honestly."

**INVITATION TO BE VULNERABLE:** "This is a circle where it's okay to be weak; it's okay not to be strong; and, it's okay not to have the answers. In creating a safe space, sometimes, the most honest thing you can say is, 'I don't know. I'm confused.' The key is to be honest."

**VICTIMIZATION:** "You may have been victimized by others, or victimized someone, but no one here is a victim, and no one here is in a position to judge anyone. Everyone who hurts someone else has been hurt themselves. That's an absolute fact. And anyone who's been hurt can either take that pain out on others, or find some way to transform it to empower them with expanded empathy and connection. That's why we're here."

**NO COMPARING PAIN:** "This isn't a day about comparing who has had it worse. We've all been hurt. This is about listening to each other."

## **2) Statistics and Setting the Context:**

Following your introduction to the day, you can move forward into setting some context. The following statistics can be passed around and read aloud, or shared in different ways throughout the day. Please note that they are primarily US-centric. For other countries or regions, take out the US statistics or, better yet, research ones that are relevant to your community.

Intimate violence against women — spouse battering, rape, incest, genital mutilation — leads to terrible human suffering and loss of economic productivity. It's also a training ground for using force to impose one's will, which leads to larger-scale war and violence. Yet, worldwide, customs, religious traditions, and public policies still accept, condone, and even promote violence against women. We must change this!

### **Some of the Realities Of Female Oppression Include:**

- Human Rights in Action reports that millions of baby girls are killed or abandoned yearly in China and India, and that 'honor' killings take the lives of hundreds of Middle Eastern and South Asian women each year.
- The United Nations estimates that two million girls between ages 5 and 11 are added to the commercial sex market each year — often by their own families. UN-compiled studies from 11 nations show that 5-48% of women report having been abused by an intimate partner. In Africa, Latin America, and Asia rates were up to 58%.

- UNICEF reports that violence against women and children is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year, 40 million children, under the age of 15, are victims of family abuse or neglect serious enough to require medical attention.
- WHO reported in 2002 that in the Republic of Korea, 67% of parents admitted whipping their children. In Ethiopia, 64% of rural school children had bruises or swellings from parental punishments. Most U.S. parents use some form of corporal punishment, and in 22 U.S. States, physical disciplining in schools is legal.
- Four times as many girls die of malnutrition as boys, because food is given preferentially to boys.
- In the United States, a woman has a 1 in 3 chance of being raped in her lifetime, and a married woman has a 50% chance of being battered in at least one of her marriages.
- Women in the United States generally make 74 cents for every dollar that men make.
- 25% of single mothers in the United States live below the poverty line, with many having to choose between feeding their children and themselves.
- Women did not have the right to vote in most US states until 1920. In many countries, women still cannot vote and are not recognized as full citizens.
- Globally, the United Nations reports, women do 66% of the world's work for less than 10% of the world's wages, and own less than 1% of the world's property.

Regardless of what country we come from, we are all affected by the sexism and prejudice in our world. Female opportunity (including education, reproductive rights, and economic equality) directly influences countless environmental and social issues. Women must have increased rights, opportunities and respect if we are to create a true partnership towards social justice and environmental sanity.

While we are accustomed to hearing about women's issues and injustice in conversations around gender, here, we will also focus on men's issues and injustices. This is not to say one situation is better or worse than another; it is simply to acknowledge that pain, violence and prejudice occurs in many ways and for all people.

#### **Some of the Realities of Male Oppression Include: (mostly U.S. statistics)**

- In the U.S., the average male life-span is seven years shorter than the average female.
- In the U.S., men successfully commit suicide at four times the rate of women.
- Men are the primary victims of violence and murder.
- Men are imprisoned at a far greater rate than women.
- Men are the vast majority of the world's soldiers.
- 50,000 Vietnam veterans are blind; 33,000 are paralyzed. Nearly 100,000 Vietnam vets have committed suicide since the end of the war, twice the number killed in battle. On any given night, 271,000 of the nation's veterans are homeless.
- Although having the advantage of higher pay for their work than women, men also have the added stress of feeling more responsible for the financial needs of their families.
- WHO reports rates of abuse are higher among women, whose husbands were beaten as children or witnessed their mothers being beaten, and that 5-10% of men suffered sexual abuse as children.
- Men make up 55% of the work force, but they experience 93% of all job-related deaths. Over two-thirds of all serious workplace injuries and diseases happen to men. Every day almost as many American men are killed at work, as were killed during an average day in the Vietnam war.
- America's men are far more likely than its women to suffer from alcohol or drug addiction. 75% of all alcoholics are men, as are 84% of those charged with drug violations.
- As more and more marriages end in divorce, divorced men have vastly higher rates of suicide, depression, and drug and alcohol abuse than do divorced women.

The following series of activities will look at the profoundly personal and, at the same time, global impact of sexism. In a variety of formats, we will explore the different ways our world has taught us to act as men and women and how this conditioning affects us. We will examine sexism as an environmental pollutant, how it hurts all of us, and how we can overcome it. Participants will have the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences in a supportive and safe environment and to learn from each other.

### **3) Males and Females Separate into Small Groups:**

If possible, have a facilitator in each group of 3-4 people. Have each group discuss questions like:

What messages have you received about being a woman (or being a man)?

What are some times in your life that you felt proud to be a woman (or a man)?

What are some times you felt ashamed to be a woman (or a man)?

Give each group about 30-45 minutes to share their stories and experiences before calling them back together.

### **4) Fishbowl Explanation:**

Form a whole circle to explain the fishbowl format. Explain that for the next while, the focus will be on the women, who will sit together in an inner circle. The men will sit on the outside in a circle and be silent observers. We call this configuration a 'fishbowl', one group holding and looking in at the other. Later, the roles will be reversed, men on the inside, women on the outside.

We usually start with the women in the center, speaking with each other first, because, in general, women are more comfortable talking about their feelings with these issues. Typically, this openness and compassion widens the safe space for the men as well, who feel more comfortable sharing after listening to the women.

As you are explaining their two roles, you might say something like, "The listeners around the outside have a crucial role to play. Although you do not speak, you hold a space within which the sharing will occur. As such, your loving, respectful support is extremely significant. By listening quietly, bearing witness, and holding each speaker in your heart, you help create a feeling of safety and connection in the room. Some people need, more than anything else, to be heard, and just listening is a profound service. It may be difficult sometimes, but I ask you to refrain from making any comments or fidgeting. Try your best to stay focused and listen, and you will likely end up learning a lot in the process.

For the females in the center, I want you to know that when you're sharing, some of you may have painful feelings come up. People in this very room have experienced tremendous abuse. It is important to speak at such times very much from your own experience and to avoid making generalizations that extend too much beyond it. For example, it is fine to express anger or resentment at someone in your life, but it would be counterproductive to say, 'All women are bitches,' or 'All men are assholes'. By sharing your own specific experiences, you can help everyone else here to better support you, without feeling the need to become defensive for something they never did. Does all that make sense?

And, I really want to emphasize to everyone that your listening is profoundly needed. Please don't get caught up in thinking that, just because you aren't talking, your presence doesn't matter. See how much you can be there for people in your heart. I promise you your attention will make a huge and transformational difference."

### **5) Focus on the Women - Stand Up and Fishbowl:**

So that the female facilitator can participate in the stand-up process, the male facilitator begins by speaking. While the other men watch, he asks the women to stand up silently for each of the following statements, if it applies to them, and to notice who's standing and notice their feelings. Then, after pausing briefly, they sit, and the next statement is read. No one has to stand, if they don't want to, but they are asked to notice their feelings regardless.

“Stand up silently if... (repeat this phrase with every statement)

1. you've ever feared you were not feminine enough.
2. you ever went on a diet to change your body size, shape or weight.
3. you've ever been afraid to speak or felt ignored because the men were doing all the talking.
4. you ever felt limited in what careers were open to you because of your gender.
5. you were ever yelled at, commented upon, whistled at, touched or harassed by a man in a public place.
6. you ever didn't hug, kiss or hold hands with another women, because you were afraid of being called a lesbian.
7. you've ever thought you might be or are lesbian or bisexual.
8. you have ever gotten drunk or done drugs to cover your feeling of pain.
9. you've ever had thoughts of suicide on a regular basis.
10. you've ever feared that your sexual 'performance' would be inadequate.
11. you've ever used sexuality to gain power over men.
12. you were ever sexually abused or touched in a way that you didn't like by another person.
13. you were ever expected to take full responsibility for birth control.
14. you've ever been frightened that you might be pregnant when you didn't want to be.
15. you have ever been hit by a man.
16. you've ever been hit by a woman.

**Note:** An alternative to the stand-up questions is to use Common Ground. The female facilitator asks the inner circle of women to stand up. She invites them to step in, one-by-one, with a statement that is true from her gender experiences. Others will join her, if the phrase also rings true for them. Be sure that the statements are personal and not general opinions. For example, 'I have felt physically weak in comparison to men', versus 'All women are weaker than men'. The men can witness in silent support around the outside. Facilitators might seed the activity with some of the themes listed above, but the group members bring most of the content themselves. You can host the Common Ground for about 10 minutes, asking for 2-3 last statements to bring it to a close.

The female facilitator then has the women sit in silence together, holding hands for a moment. She asks them to take a deep breath, and then she says, "Notice what you're feeling and how that was for you... I want to ask a few questions and, in a moment, each of us will have a chance to share, popcorn-style, whenever you are ready. You can respond to whichever questions strike a chord with you." Pause between each question and speak slowly.

"When you stood up just now, did you remember anything in particular that you would like to share? How have your feelings about yourself and your place in the world been affected by society's messages to you as a female? How do society's messages affect the way you relate to other women? How do your society's messages affect the way you relate to men? How do you think society's messages have affected the way men relate to you?"

Allow the circle to flow for as long as feels needed. Encourage everyone to share, but don't force, if anyone wants to pass. If the women's circle goes for an extremely long time, you may need to break in the middle of it or right after it. Also, it is highly likely that a woman will cry during this conversation and be comforted by many people. Comforting affection can be a positive thing, but it is important that everyone refrain from giving advice. Also, steer people away from sharing the detailed melodramas of their love life. Ask them to stick with the feelings that have been stirred for them and come to the core of what it is they want to share.

At the conclusion of the women's sharing, they join hands for a closing song or some other form of completion, like a deep breath or a moment of silence together. The male facilitator can have the men join hands in a circle around the women, and when the women are complete with their song, they can stand silently and face outward to the circle of men around them. Then, the women and men can gently bow to one another, one at a time, as one circle slowly moves clock-wise and the other counter-clockwise, until each male and each female have seen one another. If bowing feels odd, you can ask them to acknowledge each other with their eyes and let their hearts express their love and support. This works especially well with an appropriate song; it can provide a nice rhythm for the movement and help everyone feel more comfortable.

## 6) Lunch Break

If you feel it is appropriate, it can be very powerful and centering to set up lunch as a silent time for people to be alone with themselves and really digest what they heard in the morning. This can help people who need more space, and it also prevents the energy from getting too rambunctious or distracted. When they come back from lunch, pull them in silently — perhaps with a pre-arranged drum. Start early and give yourself time. Keep the silence until you are all in a circle. If needed, you can do a quick check-in with a few volunteers, asking, “How are you doing?” Or, you can have a full go-around on, “What three words describe how you’re feeling?”. Don’t go too deep in the check-in, though, as it could undermine depth later and bring things up prematurely.

You can also simply ask people to hold each other tenderly during the lunch break, because some feelings may have been stirred. But, they are welcome to connect with each other in whatever ways feel appropriate. Remind them that the day is not over, and that we will be coming back together for more in the afternoon.

## 7) Focus on the Men - Stand Up and Fishbowl:

The men now form a small circle in the center, and the women sit around the perimeter. So that the male facilitator can participate in the stand-up process, the female facilitator begins by speaking. While the women watch, she asks the men to stand up silently for each of the following statements that applies to them. She reminds them to notice who’s standing and notice their feelings. Then, after pausing briefly, they sit, and the next statement is read. All have the right to pass, if they want, but they are asked to notice their feelings regardless.

“Stand up silently if... (repeat this phrase with every statement)

1. you’ve ever worried you were not tough enough.
2. you’ve ever exercised to make yourself tougher.
3. you’ve ever been called a wimp, queer or fag.
4. you’ve ever been hit by an older man.
5. you’ve ever been hit by an older woman.
6. you’ve ever fought, because you felt you had to prove you were a man.
7. you’ve ever been physically injured and hid the pain.
8. you’ve ever gotten so mad that you drove fast.
9. you ever drank or took drugs to cover your feelings or pain.
10. you’ve ever had thoughts of suicide on a regular basis.
11. you ever hurt another person physically.
12. you were ever sexually abused or sexually touched in a way you didn’t like by another person.
13. you’ve ever thought you might be or are gay or bi-sexual.
14. you ever stopped yourself from showing affection, hugging, or touching another man, because of how it might look.
15. you’ve ever needed to talk to someone, and felt that no one was there, for you because you were a man.
16. you’ve ever not stood up to another man, because of fear of being assaulted.
17. you’ve ever been violent in an attempt to prove your manhood.
18. you’ve ever feared your sexual ‘performance’ would be inadequate.
19. you ever hurt another person sexually, or were sexual with another person when they didn’t want to be.
20. you’ve ever gotten someone pregnant.

Note: An alternative to the stand-up questions is to use Common Ground. The male facilitator asks the inner circle of men to stand up. He invites them to step in, one-by-one, with a statement that is true from his gender experiences. Others will join him, if the phrase also rings true for them. Be sure that the statements are personal and not general opinions. For example, ‘I have felt ashamed because I enjoy cooking,’ versus ‘Men

should feel ashamed for doing women's work'. The women can witness in silent support around the outside. Facilitators might seed the activity with some of the themes listed above, but the group members bring most of the content themselves. You can host the Common Ground for about 10 minutes, asking for 2-3 last statements to bring it to a close.

The male facilitator then has the men sit in silence together, holding hands for a moment. He asks them to take a deep breath, and then he says, "Notice what you're feeling and how that was for you... I want to ask a few questions and, in a moment, each of us will have a chance to share, popcorn-style, whenever you are ready. You can respond to whichever questions strike a chord with you." Pause between each question and speak slowly.

"When you stood up just now, did you remember anything in particular that you would like to share? How have your feelings about yourself and your place in the world been affected by society's messages to you as a male? How do society's messages affect the way you relate to other men? How do your society's messages affect the way you relate to women? How do you think society's messages have affected the way women relate to you? How has your father affected your sense of yourself as a man?"

The facilitator may also say, "Before we begin, I want to encourage you to go right to the heart of what's up for you on these issues. It can be tempting to say a lot of superfluous stuff, when we're scared to say something we really need to share. But, I want to encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity in a concise and direct way. For the rest of us, when we're listening, let's really hold what the person is sharing close in our hearts. Let's listen deeply and give them our full attention and support. Who would like to start?"

You may find that the men have a harder time sharing their feelings in depth. If this is the case, address it. This issue is part of the purpose of the whole exercise. Try to encourage focus throughout the discussion. It should take an average of 2-15 minutes per person. Don't cut any one off, if they're sharing something meaningful. But, watch the time and encourage conciseness, especially if you see someone getting long-winded.

At the conclusion of the men's sharing, they join hands for a closing song or some other form of completion, like a deep breath or a moment of silence together. The female facilitator can have the women join hands in a circle around the men, and when the men are complete with their song, they can stand silently and face outward to the circle of women around them. Then, the women and men can gently bow to one another, one at a time, as one circle slowly moves clock-wise and the other counter-clockwise, until each male and each female have seen one another. If bowing feels odd, you can ask them to acknowledge each other with their eyes and let their hearts express their love and support. This works especially well with an appropriate song; it can provide a nice rhythm for the movement and help everyone feel more comfortable.

If there is time before dinner, you might want to have a short, 10-15 minute bathroom break and then come back together. If it is dinner time, you may want to implement some of the suggestions given for the lunch break.

## **8) All Group Dialogue**

The co-facilitators should have the whole group form a gender-mixed circle and open the floor for full group discussion. People raise their hands if they wish to speak; they can tell stories, ask questions, and share insights or feelings. Hugs are most certainly okay. Make sure no one interrupts, although the facilitators can do so, if they feel it is necessary. They can also ask questions or make statements that will help the group along. Try to prevent finger-pointing and defensiveness, while helping feelings to find safe and meaningful expressions.

## **9) What We Want From Each Other**

Ask the women to share what they want to ask of men. This goes for all men, not just those in the circle. Ask the men to listen closely, as they'll later be asked to mirror back what they heard. Then, have the women start brainstorming. They could be saying things like, "I want men to see me as a whole person, not just a sex object." "I want men to share their feelings with me." "I want men to love and respect me, even when they don't understand me." "I want men to begin to understand the unique challenges that women face."

Notice if any women haven't spoken and consider asking them: "How about you, Phyllis? Is there anything you'd like to ask of men?"

Continue for 10-15 minutes until all of the women feel well expressed.

Next, have the men 'mirror' back what they've heard, in a brainstorm style. For example:

JOE: "You want us to see you as whole people, not just sex objects."

FRED: "You want us to begin to understand the unique problems that women face."

When the men seem to be running out of ideas, ask the women if there's anything they haven't felt has been heard. Give the women time to restate anything necessary. Then, have the men mirror back again, until it is all complete.

Then, switch. Give the men a chance to say what they want of women and have the women mirror that back to them, until it is complete.

### **10) Closing Sharing and Songs**

Invite the participants to ask questions, share feelings or any lingering thoughts. Allow a few minutes for open sharing (as needed) and then go into one or more group songs. Then, depending on the group culture, it may be time for one last, crucially important activity: Everyone is asked to hug at least four other people; there is no maximum.

#### **Variation:**

There are many variations on this gender day. You can just have the small groups and no fishbowls, or vice versa. Or break into two large groups of males and females for ample discussion. Just consider balance and time for integration, no matter what you choose to do.



# TAKING IT HOME, MOVING FORWARD

TOWARDS THE END OF A GATHERING, THE QUESTION ON ALMOST EVERYONE'S LIPS IS, "HOW DO WE TAKE THIS INTO THE REAL WORLD?" IT IS CRUCIAL TO INTEGRATE THE LEARNING WE'VE SHARED AND THE RELATIONSHIPS WE'VE BUILT BACK INTO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. HERE ARE SOME PROCESSES TO HELP WITH A SMOOTH TRANSITION.

## 116. SPEECHES WITH FEEDBACK

Time: 45 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: 6+

Materials: notecards with roles written on them – one full set per group

The purpose of this exercise is to improve your presentation skills. It is especially useful, if you're talking about how to fundraise or raise awareness on an issue.

Each member of six-person group assumes a role. The roles are: 1) speaker, 2) just appreciation, 3) body language and eye contact, 4) voice and tone, 5) content, and 6) overall presentation. Everyone will take a turn in each role. Pass out the cards, so that everyone knows what role they will start with. Before beginning, each person takes a few minutes to think about what they're going to talk about when it's their turn to be speaker, and how they want to say it. Everyone should do this at the same time. Once the group is ready, they can start, with the first speaker taking three minutes to speak, while the other people in his/her group listen carefully, looking for feedback that fits with their role. After the speech, the five other people take a few minutes to share what they thought of the speech, both positives and negatives (except for the appreciation person, who says only what was done well). The speaker should take a minute to wrap up and share what they are taking away to improve their presentation skills. Then, pass the cards to the left, so that everyone assumes a new role. Continue until each person has had a chance to speak.

## 117. TAKING A STAND SUCCESS STORIES

Time: 15 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: 5-2,000+

Have people share in pairs, a story of one time they took a stand for something they believe in. It could be talking their friend into rethinking a racist comment, or shutting down a toxic waste incinerator next door, but whatever it is and whatever the scale, have them share their experience. Every one has to share something, even if it's just coming to this event. Then, the facilitator might ask, "How many of you were inspired by something your partner shared? Why did their action inspire you? How do you want to integrate this inspiration into your own life?" Invite a few sharings for everyone to hear in the whole group.

## 118. SMALL GROUP COACHING SESSIONS

Time: 90 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: groups of 5-7

Before breaking into small groups, the facilitator gives the following instructions: "Take a moment to think about the challenges you're dealing with in your life and work. Choose one or two challenges that are especially troublesome. These are places where you're struggling and would really like some wise and supportive input. You will soon form groups of six (5-7). In these groups, you will each be in the spotlight for 15 minutes. This means that you will have the total, complete, undivided attention of all of the other members. You can use those 15 minutes in any way you wish.

You can take one minute to share your problem(s) and then have 14 minutes of input and reflections from everyone. Or, you can just ask to be listened to for 15 minutes. You can have ask the group to give you input, ideas, reflections, or to just ask questions. YOU'RE in charge. Let your group know how they can support you with their time, insights and/or attention. Please honor the 15-minute guideline, so everyone gets the same amount of time."

The participants then count off in a circle to create groups of 6 (or 5-7). Each group finds a space to meet and begin. They should be in a common space, but out of earshot of each other. Each group selects a facilitator and passes the watch to keep time for each other.

Small group coaching can be used a few times in a gathering, if you like, though it is great to have on your last morning. It's also best to go from this activity into a meal, as groups will likely finish at different times.

## 119. I CHALLENGE MYSELF

**Time: 10 Minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: groups of 2**

Find someone that you've gotten closer to at this gathering. Sit with your partner, knee to knee. Complete this sentence: "Starting today I challenge myself to..." Go back and forth, until the facilitator says stop. Each person should take about five minutes. If they are feeling stuck, their partner can prompt them with some questions like, "Where do you want to grow in yourself? In your family? In your work? In your community? What is 'stuck' that you want to make 'un-stuck'? What do you want to learn? What do you want to unlearn?"

## 120. BARN-RAISING

**Time: 15 Minutes/segment**

Many rural communities have a tradition of barn-raising. This is when one family farm would have a barn to put up, and so all the members of the community would come together to help them do it. It follows the old adage, "Many hands make work light." We bring this concept to a gathering, by giving individuals a chance to receive the full attention, ideas and support of the whole group.

Invite volunteers for 'barn-raising' segments. You can have one or two segments at the start or end of any session, thereby sprinkling the process throughout your time together. Don't try to host everyone in one session; it's too intensive and exhausting. Instead, barn-raising works best if you can have at least 4-6 segments over the course of a gathering, so participants can get a feel for it. Once they experience it, lots of folks may want a turn! It's best if barn-raising volunteers have advanced notice, so they can have to prepare.

When someone is ready for their barn-raising, the facilitator turns to them and says: "Now, we have the opportunity to give our entire attention, love and support to our dear friend. We are here with you, because we respect you, and we want to support you in your precious life and work. We invite you to take five minutes to share with us what you are up to and what you would like help with. We want enough context and information to understand what you're doing, and we also want to invite you to turn our attention to any areas where you need support, insights, or guidance. The more specific you can be about what you are wanting or needing, the more likely we can help. Then, we will take three minutes for you to answer any clarifying questions the group has. That will be followed by a go-around for the remaining seven minutes, with participants sharing any insights or ideas they may be able to contribute. We will need two note-takers, who will take alternate taking notes, in order to capture all the ideas generated. Is that all clear?"

Designate the two notetakers before you begin. Then, invite the person to speak. Give them a one-minute warning before you stop them. After the clarifying questions, go around the circle, asking people to go straight to their input. This way, more people will be able to comment. Also, make sure everyone knows that they're free to pass, if they wish. This activity needs to be TIGHTLY facilitated, to keep the process moving and the energy up.

## 121. LARGE GROUP SPEAK OUT

from Challenge Associates  
Time: at least 1-2 minutes per person  
Suggested Group Size: 15-200

Give each person a chance to speak by standing up and completing one of the following sentences:

Something I want you to know about me is...

What I never want to see, hear or have happen again is...

What I need from all of you is...

What I learned from you all is...

I am sorry about...

I love you...

Thank you...

The facilitators then follow up with directions, affirmations, and commitments. For example, they might say:

(Group), use a hand signal to send this person some love.

(Speaker), would you like to hug someone?

(Group), would someone like to give this person a hug?

(Speaker), I challenge you to ask someone you haven't hung out with for a hug.

(Group), who will be there for this person?

(Speaker), would you like to say, 'I'm sorry' to someone right now?

(Group), raise your hand if you respect them for saying they're sorry. Raise your hand if you would use them as your role model.

(Speaker), stand up tall. Everyone, I want you to notice how beautiful this person is on the inside and the outside.

(Group), give this person a round of applause if you are willing to join them in their commitment.

## 122. VISIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Time: 60-75 minutes  
(30 minutes to prepare, 30-45 minutes to share)  
Suggested Group Size: 12 or more

What are we trying to create? What kind of world do we want to live in? What is our hope for the future? Sometimes, talking doesn't enable us to envision the better world we want. Instead, we need to actually embody it!

This activity allows us to get out of the head and into the body and movement space. Rather than using words to describe the world we want to see, we create moving sculptures or 'machines' that show us that world.

Divide up your large group into smaller groups of 7-10 people each. Give everyone the simple instruction that they need to create a 'machine' or sculpture which gives a vision of the world they want to see. Different kinds of movements and poses can be used as they like. And, there should be no talking in the machine, though there can be sounds.

Allow the groups about 15-20 minutes to name and discuss key elements of their vision and any metaphors or symbols that might be particularly important. Then, encourage them to get moving and make their machines, without too much 'thinking' but more 'doing', 'moving' and 'acting'. This will allow for more creativity and spontaneity, as well as less self-consciousness and over-thinking. Allow 10-15 more minutes for the different groups to put together their machines.

Then, bring the entire group back together. Turn by turn, have each group share their sculpture-machine. Let the audience have time to guess and describe what they understood and saw in each presentation. Then, invite the group to add anything else that was missed or that they want to share about their presentation. Continue until all the groups have presented, discussed and explored their visions of social change.

**Variation 1:** (75 minutes – 60 minutes to prepare, 15 minutes to present):

If you have enough musicians in the group, who can lend support to the process, then you can also create songs through the same process. Each group has one musician (at least) for support, and they come up with lyrics and music that reflects the world they want to see. The groups then perform their songs for one another. Typically, there's less clarification needed after a song, but you may still want some space for discussion.

**Variation 2:** (45 minutes to prepare; 30 minutes to present and discuss):

Have the groups create poetry, drama or spoken word on their vision of social change and the world they want to see. You can also leave it open, and simply ask the group to come up with their own 'creative expression'.

## 123. NETWORKING PRESENTATIONS

Time: 60 minutes (2 minutes per person)  
Suggested Group Size: 10 or more

When people have had a chance to build trust, form friendships and feel invested, it's nice to create a space where they can hear each other's dream, or upcoming project, and support one another. This should come towards the end of the event, so that people don't feel forced to make a commitment or lend support prematurely.

Set the room up as a theater, with people seated in rows, looking towards a single 'stage'. Invite people to come forward, one-by-one, and give a two-minute presentation about a dream or project that they want people to join them in. The presentation should be high energy, with enthusiastic cheering after each person completes. Tightly time the presentations, so that everyone gets a turn. And, as always, people are free to pass, if they wish.

Have two people alternate recording for the group, capturing the presentation in a sentence or two when it's finished. These can be distributed to everyone after the gathering. At the same time, ask everyone to take note of the projects/dreams they are excited about, and be prepared to contact that person afterward with whatever resources, skills or help they can provide. The facilitator may also ask folks who have ideas and support to raise their hands, and the notetakers can record this information. That way, the presenter can follow-up with them afterward. Create

some free time and space after all of the presentations, ideally going to a meal or long break time, so that people can freely network and receive the support they need.

## 124. ALIGNING ACTIONS WITH VALUES

**Time: 30 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: any**

Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Sometimes, we want concrete examples and ideas of things we can do, actual steps to take in our daily lives. We know what we are doing, but we want more ideas and want to be inspired by others’ example.

Go around in a circle, and invite each person to share one or two specific actions they are taking that align with their values and visions of social change. These could be things they are doing with their health, their community, their spirituality, their environment, their food, etc., but it should be an actual practice. The facilitator might ask, “What is something you are doing in your daily life that contributes to creating the better world you want to see?”

Ask someone to record these ideas, which can then be shared back with the group in a follow-up email or letter, to inspire more good actions in the world.

**Variation:** You can also focus on the theme of ‘personal sustainability’, capturing examples of how people are taking care of themselves, so as not to burn out. Again, this list can be recorded and distributed to everyone following the gathering.

## 125. MOMENTUM PROCESS

**Time: 2+ hours**  
**Suggested Group Size: 4+**  
**Materials: pens and Momentum Process worksheets**

In a very real sense, the last day of gathering is not an ending but only a beginning. If participants leave thinking, “Wow, that was a great week! Too bad I have to go home now,” then we will have failed to accomplish our goals. If they leave thinking, “What an amazing week! I can’t wait to go home and apply all that I’ve learned in my life. I’m going to change this world!”, then we will have succeeded.

The gathering is not intended to be a vacation from the ‘real world’ (though rest and relaxation are an important part of any gathering). Rather, it’s more of a support and catalyst towards passion and purpose and towards making a meaningful, positive difference with one’s life. Throughout your time, many participants may experience the most loving, supportive environment they’ve ever had. They need to know that they helped to create that environment, and that the task before them is to carry this experience forth, into the rest of their lives. If participants leave rich with skills, love, and connection to their highest life’s commitments — if they look forward to living with greater integrity — then the impact of the gathering will not just be on the individual people, but also on a whole planet.

Sometimes, people who have been happy all week will look a little more sober, as they contemplate returning to painful, unsupportive and, occasionally, abusive environments. This is not something to avoid. Examining the uncomfortable, as well as the beautiful, in an atmosphere of support and empowerment, can help participants enormously.

The purpose of the Momentum Process is to help participants take the week they have shared and integrate it into their lives. It works well on the last full day of an event and is great to do outdoors, if the temperature and environment are conducive to concentration (i.e., no hungry mosquitoes, extreme temperatures, or big winds).

- 1) Get participants into an energetic and enthusiastic state. This is particularly important if they are looking tired, or if they have been sitting for a while. It can be accomplished with a song, a cheer, a dance/drumming session, or a pep rally. Invite them to rise to a new level of presence for a powerful and vital process.
- 2) Frame this exercise and its importance: “We will now focus on making the transition from a great week to a whole lifetime of passion, purpose, clarity and commitment.” Share some inspiring words about the power of our dreams and our visions. “Listening to our hearts shapes our personal lives and our world. How many of you are committed to investing the next couple of hours fully — giving 110% of yourself — to make sure that you take everything valuable from this gathering back home into your daily life?”
- 3) Ask participants to choose a buddy. Ideally, it should be someone they expect to keep in touch with in the future. Ask them to sit on the ground, back to back with their buddy, so that they are leaning against one another. The pairs should be scattered throughout the same general area, all within earshot of the facilitator’s voice.
- 4) Ask participants to be silent and close their eyes. Then say something like, “I’m now going to invite you on a journey to explore your future, to look at your values and your life’s highest commitments. We’re going to do some visioning together. I’m going to share some questions with you, and I invite you to answer them silently to yourself.”

Then, ask the following series of questions. Speak slowly, and pause for 10-15 seconds after each question, so participants have time to digest and absorb it, and, also, to imagine their answers.

- a) What kind of person do you want to be?
- b) What values do you want your life to affirm?
- c) When you look back at the end of your life, who do you want to have been? We’re not talking about your career, or what you’re going to ‘do with your life’. We’re talking about your character. When you look back on the other side of your life, what do you want to see?
- d) What is most important to you?
- e) What kind of person are you becoming?

While you are speaking, have a second facilitator pass out the Momentum Process worksheets (we’ve included a sample), placing one in front of each person. Also, pass out pens and, if needed, folders to use as a hard surface for writing. The second facilitator should do this quietly, so as not to disturb the visioning process.

- 5) “Now, I want to invite you to keep that vision in your mind and heart, and imagine yourself floating through time, until you arrive at exactly one year from today.” State the date that is exactly one year into the future, for example, “June 15th, 2011”). Then, ask the following questions, speaking slowly and pausing for about 30 seconds between each one:
  - Notice what you see around you, what you hear and feel.
  - Where are you?
  - When you look in the mirror at the end of one year, what do you see? Who are you? What would you say to yourself?
  - Where are you in terms of your dreams? Your connection to your hopes and prayers?
  - Where are you with your physical health? With your body and how you feel about it?
  - What is your relationship with your family like? They may or may not have changed at all. But you may be experiencing them in a new way

How has your relationship with your family grown or changed? Is it easier it is for you to handle old problems that used to hook you?

- What is your relationship with your friends like? How much love do you share? How much connection and support? How honest are you? What new people are in your life now, who, just a year ago, you dreamed of having in your life? If you were a fly on the wall, what affirming things would your new and old friends be saying about you?
- Where are you with your relationship to spirituality, however you define it? With your sense of connection to forces greater and wiser than yourself? How open are you to inspiration, to magic, to the miraculous?
- Where are you with your belief in your own worth and power? How do you see yourself? How courageous are you? What are you committed to? How big do you smile? Do you feel lighter or heavier? More alive or less alive?
- Imagine, if this was all true, if everything that you just saw, heard and felt were guaranteed to come true, how would you be sitting right now? Where would your shoulders be? What kind of facial expression would you have? How would you be breathing?
- Now, double that feeling in your body. Pour it on, and make it feel good! If you like this feeling, pump your fist in the air and say, 'YES!'

**6)** “Now, still remaining in silence, open your eyes and take a look at the paper in front of you. On the side that says ‘A Vision’, write your vision of who you want to be and how you want to be living in a year. Keep in mind that you can write in linear prose, or bullet points, or abstract poetry. Use whatever style works for you to express yourself. We’ll take about 5-10 minutes for this part. Please stay silent, and go ahead and begin.”

**7)** When you start to notice people looking finished, ask, “Raise your hand if you’re ready to move on soon.” Give a few more minutes, if needed.

**8)** When the group is ready, ask them to turn and face their partner. “One of you will begin and share with your partner whatever feels comfortable to you. I invite you to both listen and share in a way that fosters safe space, honesty and connection. This process could be very meaningful, if you make it so. After you have shared, hand your partner your sheet. They will flip it over and ask you the questions written on the back side. They will listen and record your answers to these questions. This is not a form to fill out, but rather a useful tool, to help your partner clarify their vision and how to get there. Focus on one person at a time. Only switch when the first person feels complete with all the questions they want to answer. Take about 20 minutes each.”

**9)** After about 15-20 minutes, announce that pairs should be switching soon. After another 15-20 minutes, announce that it’s time to wrap up. As the pairs complete, invite them to hug and then go on to your break.

**10)** Or, if you have time, call them back into a circle. Ask for a show of hands of how many people have made commitments with their partners. If only a few raise their hands, invite the rest to consider a commitment they might want to make. Then, move into a powerful, magnificent Commitment Circle (next activity).

**Variation:** Either after participants vision their life in a year, but before sharing with their buddies, or else after the Commitment Circle, you can have participants write a letter to themselves that they will receive in one month. Ask them to write down everything they want themselves to remember. They should make sure the letter includes lots of appreciation for who they are and the gifts they bring, and that it conveys whatever insights they found valuable. They can fold and address these totally-confidential letters and give them to the facilitators, who must send them out one month later.



## **Momentum Process Worksheet**

(side one)

### **A Vision**

What kind of person do you want to be a year from today? What values do you want your life to stand for? We're not necessarily talking about your career, or what you're going to 'do with your life'. We're talking about your character. What is most important to you? What kind of person do you want to grow into? This is a kind of mission statement for your life. It can change with the years. But what is your vision right now? When you look in the mirror, who do you want to see? How deeply do you want to love? What difference do you want to make? You don't need to write in linear prose. Whatever style works for you...

*This text goes at the top of the page, leaving plenty of white space below it.*

(side two – to save paper!)

### **Questions To Ask Your Buddy**

You can take notes on your buddy's answers, and then give them this page afterwards.

- 1) If you feel comfortable with it, share your "Vision" with me, and then tell me about what you saw when you looked one year into the future. What was exciting or inspiring to you? What was especially moving or compelling?
- 2) What are some of the key elements of your vision? Why are they important to you?
- 3) What do you see as being the biggest challenges to your achieving this vision?
- 4) What are some ways to overcome those challenges?
- 5) What people or resources are especially important to your having the support you need?
- 6) How can you create support in your life for who you are and what you want to do?
- 7) Is there anything you particularly want to remember that might help you in the times to come?
- 8) What are some things you can do in the next week that will help you move towards your vision? In the next month?
- 9) Do you want to commit to specific actions you can take in your life? What specifically?
- 10) Are there any ways that I can support you? How often would you like me to check in with you?

*Leave some white space between each of these questions, so partners can write in answers.*

## 126. COMMITMENT CIRCLE

**Time: 1 minute/person**  
**Suggested Group Size: any**

Everyone stands to form a circle. One person volunteers to start. S/he steps into the middle and shares a commitment s/he wants to make, for which s/he wants the group's support. For example, "I commit to planting a garden," or "I commit to treating myself with care and respect." Everyone else shouts, "YES!" to show support for the person's commitment. It's important to make sure the group strongly gives its support. Have them practice once or twice, before you begin, to make sure the energy level is high.

Ask people speak popcorn-style, stepping up when they are ready. Some people may take more than one turn. The commitments can be for the day, the week, the rest of their lives, or for anything in between. Before you begin, you might want to invite people to get specific and tangible with their commitments, by asking them: What is your specific commitment? When will you start? What will you do first? When will you finish?

People might make commitments to stop smoking, eat more healthily, start a club or organization, exercise more regularly... Anything goes! As Tad Hargrave, a long-time YES! Facilitator, likes to say, "Under-promise and over-deliver. Those are the best kind of commitments." Encourage everyone to make at least one commitment.

## 127. GOAL SETTING

**Time: 45 minutes**  
**Suggested Group Size: groups of 2**

If you don't have time for a full Momentum Process, you can try this instead. It is best done at the end of a gathering, as it enables everyone to leave with a concrete goal.

Everyone finds a partner. The pair decides who will be 'A' and who will be 'B'. The facilitator must ask each question twice, starting with, "A, ask B... (the question)", and then, "Now, B's ask the A's... (the same question)". Allow 2-5 minutes for each answer.

- If you were to dream really big, what would you want to do with your life to make a difference in this world?
- What barriers are in the way of your living the life you want to live?
- What resources, knowledge and support do you already have that will help you?
- What do you need to acquire and learn?
- Where will you begin? What's one thing you can do next week?
- What can you do in the next month?
- What can you do in the next year?
- How might I help support you in achieving your goal?

After the partner-sharing, invite people to present their goals to the whole group.

# 128. FORGIVENESS EXERCISE

Time: 60+ minutes  
Suggested group size: 10+  
Materials: pens and notecards

Many things can get stirred up by the end of the week. Consciously or (more often) unconsciously, we end up stepping on each other's toes and causing small (and sometimes bigger) hurts to each other. Sometimes, we realize we have done something. Other times, we have no clue about it. Usually, we think the other person is to blame and rarely do we see our own role in creating the hurt/pain. While we cannot control and can only minimally influence what other people do, we are ultimately responsible for our own choices and impacts. So whatever someone else may or may not have done, if we have caused them pain, then it can be healing to bring loving attention to the place of distress.

In the Jain tradition, as with other spiritual faiths, asking for forgiveness is an act of spiritual purification and self-learning. Jains ask forgiveness for anything they may have said, thought or done, unintentionally or intentionally, consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly. That's a lot! Asking for forgiveness – first of ourselves and then of each other – comes from place of humility and vulnerability. It's not easy to do, but it can help lay the foundation for healing, deeper understanding, and true friendship (both now and in the future).

Everyone starts out in a circle. Share some of the context behind the activity, especially why it feels important to do this now, as you are bringing the week to a close.

Pass out pens and index cards (1-2 cards per person). Write down who in the group you want to ask forgiveness from and why. This writing is completely anonymous, and is a chance to be totally candid with yourself, without needing to think about how it might be seen by anyone else. Take about 7-10 minutes for this.

Ask the group to come back together. If anyone feels moved to do so, they can publicly ask someone for forgiveness, and say why. The intention in any sharing is to be honest in a way that takes personal responsibility for their own part in whatever dynamic they are naming. It is not to ask the other person to apologize to them. So, it would not be a place to say, "I would like to ask you to forgive me for judging you when I realized that you were a jerk," as such comments carry a thinly disguised energy of blame and disrespect. The core principle is that people who are speaking do so with a genuine apology and an intention towards healing. Give space for that moment to unfold. It may not get resolved, but rather just be the beginning for the two of them to continue later.

Continue for as long as it feels right in the group (maybe 45 minutes).

Offer time/space for people to meet one on one and continue with the process (maybe 30 minutes). This can flow into free time, so people who are done sooner can move on to a meal or whatever is next.

## Additional Suggestions:

- ▶ At one Jam it was nice to have a hands-on group/community activity to follow this – to continue the healing together while getting out of our minds and into our bodies.
- ▶ Considering having this exercise on the second to last day of your gathering, so people have time for 'clearing things up' before they leave. Be wary of people using this opportunity to vent their anger or pass blame. Really encourage folks to ask for forgiveness (i.e., "I would like to ask so-and-so to forgive me") vs. forgiving someone that they want to blame (i.e., "I would like to forgive so-and-so for being so rude"). It's about owning our own piece, not trying to make others own theirs.
- ▶ It's also important to emphasize that forgiveness should be asked for without expectations of quick resolutions or reciprocal apologies, even though, as the saying goes, it takes two to tango. But this process is about giving space for responsibility and healing.
- ▶ Lastly, the asking should come from a genuine place of wanting movement in oneself. If you are not ready for asking, or you will be glad you did only if the other person apologizes too, or thanks you, then you might not want to do it.

## 129. CLOSING CHECK-IN

Time: Depends on group size  
Suggested Group Size: 2-35

As you began, so should you end. The closing check-in gives every person one last opportunity to share their thoughts with the whole group. Ideally, it should be done before you pass out evaluations and before an Appreciation Circle.

Participants go around in a circle, each having a turn to share. If you have a small group or abundant time, you can leave the time open-ended, but if there are more than 15 people you may want to suggest a time for each sharing (for example, four minutes per person). We often pass a watch. The person seated next to the speaker can keep time, touching the speaker's knee when they have 30 seconds left, their shoulder when time is up, and giving them a hug if they keep going more than 30 seconds over. If there are more than 15 people in the circle, it can be good to take a stretch break every 8-10 people.

For the end of your gathering, you may want to ask:

- What do you need to say to feel complete with this group?
- What might you be taking away?
- Is there anything you want to ask for or to offer?

## 130. APPRECIATION CIRCLE

Time: 1-2 minutes/person  
Suggested Group Size: 8-50  
Materials: none

This is great on the last night of a gathering, to end the time on a high note. Everyone sits in a circle. One person is appreciated at a time, going around the circle. Depending on the time available, the facilitator can call on 2-4 people who raise their hands to appreciate each person (it should be the same number of appreciations for each person). The facilitator can call on different people, to ensure that everyone has a chance to give an appreciation.

To appreciate someone, address him or her by name and say one or two specific things you appreciate about them. For example: "Fred, I appreciate your honesty in the last discussion and your ability to make me laugh just when I needed it most."

Facilitators must make sure that everyone uses first person when appreciating someone, i.e., "I appreciate you, Cindy ...", not "I appreciate her," or "I appreciate Cindy".

**Variation:** Each person has two minutes for anyone in the group to appreciate them. The person to the left keeps time, and the watch is passed around the circle. The benefit of this approach is that more people can get a chance to state their appreciation. The drawback is the time stress, which encourages people to jump in fast.

# QUOTES

STIR THE IMAGINATION, INSPIRE THE SOUL, AND CATALYZE ACTION

## COMMITMENT AND PERSEVERANCE

*“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.  
“Concerning all acts of initiative, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too.”*  
— as told to Goethe by W.H. Murray

“All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.”

— as told to Goethe  
by W.H. Murray

“I asked for strength,  
and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

“I asked for wisdom,  
and God gave me problems to learn to solve.

“I asked for prosperity,  
and God gave me a brain and brawn to work.

“I asked for courage,  
and God gave me dangers to overcome.

“I asked for love,  
and God gave me people to help.

“I asked for favors,  
and God gave me opportunities.

“I received nothing I wanted.  
I received everything I needed.”

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

“I am a member of the community and as a member it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can before I die. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch that I want to make burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

— George Bernard Shaw

“This is the true joy in life, to be used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, to be thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap. To be a force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

— George Bernard Shaw

*“I do not want to talk about what you understand about this world. I want to know what you will do about it. I do not want to know what you hope. I want to know what you will work for. I do not want your sympathy for the needs of humanity. I want your muscle.”*

— Robert Fulghum

*“After the final No, there comes a Yes. And on that Yes, the future of the world depends.”*

— Wallace Stevens

May you forever be haunted by your conscience.  
May you grow ever so vigilant in the realization that the miracle of our biological differences in birth is not a natural reason to consider one as subordinate to the other.  
May you forever be uncomfortable in the thought that the difference between you and indigenous peoples is the persistence of a legal doctrine declaring them as having a low level of intelligence and backward and uncivilized.  
May you remember others as they struggle for shelter as you enjoy yours in the worse of weather conditions.  
May you be forever awed by the political influence of capital and the insistent struggle of workers for a decent wage and the dignity of collective recognition.  
May you be conscious that the hands that have nurtured the food in the simplest and fanciest of meals eat less than three times daily.  
May you imagine as you revel in the giggles of your children the ever growing possibilities of child labor oppression harassment and sexual assault.  
May you realize that the ecological disaster that you have watched with detachment on the television— may happen or is happening to you at present.  
May you feel the powerlessness of other people, of your people, of your own powerlessness.  
May you understand the other as you understand yourself, while you comprehend the otherness of others in yourself.  
May we be forever haunted by a detailed vision of a just society, an equitable society, a gender fair society, a culturally appropriate society.  
And in these processes of becoming and being may we be haunted enough to empower.  
May all these continue to haunt you and to disturb you.  
May you forever be empowered.

— Atty Marvic Leonen

## YOUTHFUL ATTITUDES

“Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of rosy cheeks, red lips and supple knees; it is a matter of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions; a freshness of the deep springs of life.

“Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease. This often exists in an adult of 60 more than a child of 20. Nobody grows old merely by a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals.

“Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, fear, self-distrust bows the heart and turns the spirit back to dust.

“Whether 60 or 16, there is in every human being’s heart the lure of wonder, the unfailing childlike appetite of what’s next. In the center of your heart and my heart it’s as if there were a radio antenna; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, courage and power from people and from the infinite, so long are you young.”

— Samuel Ullman

“We must never cease our exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to return to the place where we first began and to truly know that place for the first time.”

— T.S. Eliot

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

— Marcel Proust

“All truth goes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. And lastly, it is accepted as self-evident.”

— Arthur Schoepenhauer

“To be nobody-but-yourself in a world which is doing its best night and day, to make you everybody else — means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting.”

— E. E. Cummings

# THE COURAGE TO TAKE A STAND AND ACT

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves:

Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking  
so that other people won’t feel insecure around you.

We were born to manifest the glory of God  
that is within us.

It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone.

And, as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.”

— Marianne Williamson,  
as quoted by Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech

“How to bring into being a world that is not only sustain-  
able, functional and equitable, but also deeply desirable, is  
a question of leadership and ethics and vision and courage,  
properties not of computer models but of the human heart  
and soul.”  
— Donella and Dennis Meadows and Jorgen Randers  
*Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*

“Why don’t you stay in the  
wilderness? Because that isn’t  
where it’s at. It’s back in the  
city, back in downtown St. Louis,  
back in Los Angeles ... You go  
to nature for an experience of  
the sacred ... to reestablish your  
contact with the core of things ...  
The final test is whether your  
experience of the sacred in  
nature enables you to cope more  
effectively with the problems  
of humanity.”

— Will Unsoeld,  
Mountaineer and Educator

“Don’t ask yourself what the  
world needs. Ask yourself  
what makes you come alive,  
and then go and do that.  
Because what the world  
needs is people that have  
come alive.”

— Harold Thurman Whitman



"I am only one person, and I cannot do everything. But, just because I cannot do everything, does not mean that I will refuse to do that which I can."

— Helen Keller

"Someday, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tide and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love. Then, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."

— Teilhard de Chardin

"We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity... Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect... We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. This may well be mankind's last chance to choose between chaos and community."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,  
Where Do We Go From Here:  
Chaos or Community?

"All truth goes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. And lastly, it is accepted as self-evident."

— Arthur Schoepenhauer

"The reasonable (person) adapts herself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to change the world. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable person."

— George Bernard Shaw

"Give me a place to stand...  
And I will move  
the world."

— Archimedes

## CARPE DIEM: THE ADVENTUROUS, PASSIONATE LIFE

"Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and the pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because, in the last analysis, all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace."

— Frederic Buechner

"I will not live an unlived life, I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow my living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise. I choose to risk my significance; to live, so that which came to me as seed goes to the next as blossom, and that which came to me as blossom, goes on as fruit."

— Dawna Markova

"Come to the edge," she said. They said, "We are afraid." "Come to the edge," she said. They came. She pushed them... and they flew."

— Guillaume Apollinaire

"Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things... I am tempted to think that perhaps there are no little things."

— Bruce Barton

"With passion pray. With passion make love. With passion eat and drink and dance and play. Why look like a dead fish in this Ocean of God?"

— Rumi

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

# THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

“I don’t know what your destiny will be. But one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.”

— Albert Schweitzer

“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

— Teilhard de Chardin

“A person totally wrapped up in himself makes a small package.”

— Harry Emerson Fosdick

“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and found that life was service. I acted and, behold, service was joy.”

— Rabindranath Tagore

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

— Fred Buechner

“Be the change you wish to see for the world.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

## THE SHAMBALLA PROPHECY

*as told by Joanna Macy*

Across twelve centuries, the Shambhala prophecy comes from ancient Tibetan Buddhism. The prophecy foretells of a time when all life on Earth is in danger. Great barbarian powers have arisen. Although these powers spend much of their wealth in preparations to annihilate each other, they have much in common: weapons of unfathomable destructive power and technologies that lay waste to our world. In this era, when the future of sentient life hangs by the frailest of threads, the kingdom of Shambhala emerges.

You cannot go there, for it is not a place; it is not a geopolitical entity. It exists in the hearts and minds of the Shambhala warriors. That is the term the prophecy used: 'warriors'. You cannot recognize the Shambhala warrior when you see him or her, for they wear no uniforms or insignia, and they carry no specific banners. They have no barricades on which to climb or threaten the enemy, or behind which they can hide to rest or regroup. They do not even have any home turf. Always they must move on the terrain of the barbarians themselves.

Now the time comes when great courage — moral and physical courage — is required of the Shambhala warriors, for they must go into the very heart of the barbarian power, into the pits and pockets and citadels where the weapons are kept, to dismantle them. To dismantle weapons, in every sense of the word, they must go into the corridors of power where decisions are made.

The Shambhala warriors have the courage to do this because they know that these weapons are manomaya. They are mind-made. Made by the human mind, they can be unmade by the human mind.

The Shambhala warriors know that the dangers threatening life on Earth are not visited on us by any extraterrestrial power, satanic deities, or pre-ordained evil fate. They arise from our own decisions, our own lifestyles, and our own relationships.

So, in this time, the Shambhala warriors go into training in the use of two weapons. The weapons are compassion and insight. Both are necessary, the prophecy foretells. The Shambhala warriors must have compassion because it gives the juice, the power, the passion to move. It means to not be afraid of the pain of the world. Then, you can open to it, step forward, act. But that weapon by itself is not enough. It can burn you out, so you need the other — you need insight into the radical interdependence of all phenomena. With that wisdom, you know that it is not a battle between 'good guys' and 'bad guys', because the line between good and evil runs through the landscape of every human heart. With insight into our profound inter-relatedness, you know that actions undertaken with pure intent have repercussions throughout the web of life, beyond what you can measure or discern. By itself, that insight may appear too cool, conceptual, to sustain you and keep you moving, so you need the heat of compassion. Together, these two can sustain us as agents of wholesome change. They are gifts for us to claim now in the healing of our world.

Many in the Tibetan lineage believe that this is the time of the ancient prophecy. If so, perhaps we are among the Shambhala warriors.

## **RACISM, VIOLENCE, AND JUSTICE**

“Violence is anything that denies human integrity and leads to hopelessness and helplessness.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Environmental justice advocates are not saying, ‘Take the poisons out of our community and put them in a white community.’ They are saying that no community should have to live with these poisons. They have thus taken the moral high road and are building a multicultural and inclusive movement that has the potential of transforming the political landscape of this nation.”

— Rev. Benjamin Chavis, Jr.

“Environmental racism is racial discrimination in environmental policymaking. It is racial discrimination in the enforcement of regulations and laws. It is racial discrimination in the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste disposal and the sites of polluting industries. It is racial discrimination in the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in communities of color. And, it is racial discrimination in the history of excluding people of color from mainstream environmental groups, decision-making boards, commissions, and regulatory bodies.”

— Rev. Benjamin Chavis, Jr.

Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, or economic changes. In this sense, power is not only desirable but necessary in order to implement the demands of love and justice. One of the greatest problems of history is that the concepts of love and power are usually contrasted as polar opposites. Love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

- The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.

# PEACE, RECONCILIATION, AND DIVERSITY

"While walking in a toy store, The day before today,  
I came upon a crayon box, With many things to say.

"I don't like red!", said Orange, And Green said, "Nor do I!"  
"And no one here likes Yellow, But no one knows just why."

"We are a box of crayons, That does not get along,"  
Said Blue to all the others, "Something here is wrong!"

Well, I bought that box of crayons, And I took it home with me,  
And I laid out all the colors, So the crayons could all see...

They watched me as I colored, With Red and Blue and Green,  
And Black and White and Orange, And every color in between.

They watched as Green became the grass, And Blue became  
the sky.  
The Yellow sun was shining bright, On White clouds drifting by.

Colors changing as they touched, Becoming something new.  
They watched me as I colored, They watched 'till I was through.

And when I'd finally finished, I began to walk away,  
And as I did the crayon box, Had something more to say...

"I do like Red!", said Orange, And Green said, "So do I!"  
"And Blue, you were terrific, So high up in the sky!"

"We are a box of crayons, Each of us unique,  
But when we get together, The picture is complete."

(A story by Shane De Rolf)

"You can't solve a problem on the same level on which it  
was created. You have to rise above it to the next level."

— Albert Einstein

"An eye for an eye will  
only leave the whole  
world blind."

— Mahatma Gandhi

"The best way  
to destroy an  
enemy is to  
make him (or  
her) a friend."

— Abraham  
Lincoln

"We must learn to live together as brothers, or we are going to  
perish together as fools."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“We honor a diversity of tactics and strategies in the struggle for a world of peace, justice and sustainability. In our work, we advocate for the principle and active implementation of nonviolent resistance to systems of exploitation and injustice. We believe, with Cesar Chavez, Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Parks, and many other successful social change activists, that non-violence is a powerful strategic method for addressing the roots of the fear, greed and violence that plague our times. When properly applied, we believe that nonviolence has a unique capacity to awaken the conscience of adversaries and turn enemies into friends, and that it is a potent and even revolutionary commitment. We envision a world that works for everyone; even those who would, in the current context, oppress others for their own perceived gain. We believe that no one is free until everyone is free, and that material gain at the expense of others, leads to a poverty of the spirit. While a world where everyone wins may be far off, we affirm that it is possible and, in fact, necessary.”

— Ocean Robbins and Tad Hargrave, YES!

“Our work supports bridges of solidarity and partnership being built across the lines of historic (and often current) separation, including race, class, gender, geography, and area of focus. Fundamental to this work is the recognition that we are facing profound injustices and savage inequities in our world today, and that certain people have received material benefit, while others have been profoundly marginalized by the oppressions of our times. Also fundamental to this work is the belief that injustice hurts all of us, and that building a world that works for everybody will take all of us. This is easier said than done. Years of prejudice, ignorance and hurt often prevent us from completely hearing one another and relating as human beings and allies. As historically privileged and historically underprivileged groups come together, we believe that there is a central distinction to be made regarding the use of whatever level of privilege we hold in our lives.

This is the distinction between charity and solidarity. Charity was once defined as love in action. Sadly, at its worst, modern charity says, “Let’s go help those people, over there, with their problems.” Charity, by itself, can disown the ‘giver’s’ own connection with and responsibility for the problem. It can even be used to justify the privileges that come at the expense of others. This is not to downplay the importance of charitable acts and giving in the world. Charity is vital, but it is not enough.

Charity is made complete when it is grounded in solidarity. Solidarity is not an action you can take, so much as a stand you can embody. It is grounded in partnership. While charity may help those on trial by the system, solidarity may put the system on trial. It not only gives resources, but it actively works to change the very systems that unfairly put resources into the hands of some at the expense of others. Solidarity says, “I don’t want to benefit unfairly from a system that is unjust.” It knows that the quality of life gained by privilege over others is a pale shadow of the quality of life gained by a world shaped by, for and of the highest dreams of us all. It also knows that we are all wounded by the oppressive cultures we live, in different ways, sometimes economically and sometimes spiritually. Solidarity is borne of knowing that we are all connected, and so the choice of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is a false one. We choose to serve one another, because we know that to serve others is to serve ourselves. What harms anyone harms everyone. No one is truly free until everyone is free.”

— Ocean Robbins and Tad Hargrave, YES!

## LIVING SIMPLY

“When you let go of trying to get more of what you don’t really need — which is what most of us spend our lives trying to get more of — an enormous amount of energy is freed up to make a difference with what you have. When you make a difference with what you have — it expands. What you appreciate — appreciates.”

— Lynne Twist

“Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone. The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of non-essentials.”

— Lin Yutang

An American businessman was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village, when a tiny boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them. The Mexican replied, “Only a little while.” The American then asked why didn’t he stay out longer and catch more fish? The Mexican said he had enough to support his family’s immediate needs. The American then asked, “But, what do you do with the rest of your time?” The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening, where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.” The American scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you make more money. You should spend more time fishing. With the proceeds, you could buy a bigger boat.” The Mexican asked, “And then, what?” “With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats. Eventually, you would have a fleet of fishing boats.” The Mexican asked, “And then, what?” The American continued, “Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you would sell directly to the processor. Eventually, you would open your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution.” Again, the Mexican asked, “And then, what?” The American was excited now: “You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then Los Angeles, and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.” The Mexican fisherman asked, “But señor, how long will this all take?” To which the American replied, “15-20 years.” The Mexican asked, “But what then, señor?” The American laughed and said, “That’s the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions.” “Millions, señor? Then what?” The American said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings, where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.” The Mexican replied, “But, I am doing all of that now! Why would I lose 50 years of my life by following you?”



## STILL I RISE

YOU MAY WRITE ME DOWN IN HISTORY  
WITH YOUR BITTER, TWISTED LIES,  
YOU MAY TROD ME IN THE VERY DIRT  
BUT STILL, LIKE DUST, I'LL RISE.

DOES MY SASSINESS UPSET YOU?  
WHY ARE YOU BESET WITH GLOOM?  
'CAUSE I WALK LIKE I'VE GOT OIL WELLS  
PUMPING IN MY LIVING ROOM.

JUST LIKE MOONS AND LIKE SUNS,  
WITH THE CERTAINTY OF TIDES,  
JUST LIKE HOPES SPRINGING HIGH,  
STILL I'LL RISE.

DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME BROKEN?  
BOWED HEAD AND LOWERED EYES?  
SHOULDERS FALLING DOWN LIKE  
TEARDROPS,  
WEAKENED BY MY SOULFUL CRIES.

DOES MY HAUGHTINESS OFFEND YOU?  
DON'T YOU TAKE IT AWFUL HARD?  
'CAUSE I LAUGH LIKE I GOT GOLD MINES  
DIGGIN' IN MY OWN BACK YARD.

YOU MAY SHOOT ME WITH YOUR  
WORDS,  
YOU MAY CUT ME WITH YOUR EYES,  
YOU MAY KILL ME WITH YOUR  
HATEFULNESS,  
BUT STILL, LIKE AIR, I'LL RISE.

DOES MY SEXINESS UPSET YOU?  
DOES IT COME AS A SURPRISE?  
THAT I DANCE LIKE I'VE GOT DIAMONDS  
AT THE MEETING OF MY THIGHS?

INTO A DAYBREAK THAT'S WONDROUSLY  
CLEAR  
I RISE

OUT OF THE HUTS OF HISTORY'S SHAME  
I RISE  
UP FROM A PAST THAT'S ROOTED IN PAIN  
I RISE

I'M A BLACK OCEAN, LEAPING AND WIDE,  
WELLING AND SWELLING I BEAR IN THE  
TIDE.  
LEAVING BEHIND NIGHTS OF TERROR AND  
FEAR  
I RISE  
INTO A DAYBREAK THAT'S WONDROUSLY  
CLEAR  
I RISE

BRINGING THE GIFTS MY ANCESTORS GAVE,  
I AM THE DREAM AND THE HOPE OF THE  
SLAVE.  
I RISE  
I RISE  
I RISE.

— MAYA ANGELOU

# NOTES:

