
Games that Build Community F.A.S.T.

... the little BIG book of the popular games we play at Children's Choice and feature in our teambuilding workshops.

... a portable, pocket or backpack-friendly resource for afterschool educators, school-age child caregivers, recreation assistants, group leaders, and camp counselors.

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Acknowledgements:

We specially acknowledge legendary play and teambuilding leaders like Dr. Jim Cain, Dr. Bill Michaelis, and Jim (Mr. Happy) Atkinson for teaching many in our field how to play.

We specially acknowledge our own staff at Children's Choice for teaching and learning how to be great leaders and facilitators of positive development.

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Loosely based on Developmental Sequence in Small Groups by Bruce Tuckman. Psychological Bulletin, Vol 63(6), Jun 1965, 384-399.

Tuckman researched various studies of changes in group formation over time and developed a generalizable model of stages of group formation with a high degree of consistency. Tuckman's stages were named Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and later a 5th stage - Adjourning.

When applying this model to children, we attempted to improve it by accounting for the unique traits and the forever changing and turbulent nature of child development. So we spread the stage known as "Norming" throughout the stages since in childhood this stage is constantly developing but also constantly changing. We named this stage "Attempting."

In childhood we have noticed that groups are constantly forming and attempting and storming and reforming. Children are attempting to learn new skills, which leads to storming behavior which lead back to attempting to learn new skills. Which ultimately, if everything goes well, leads to a Transforming stage as the group transforms into a team with a strong sense of belonging and community.

Our revised teambuilding stages are Forming, Attempting, Storming, and Transforming = F.A.S.T.

Picking “It” or a Leader

Many of the games in this book involve picking a player to begin the game or be the first leader. There are many fair ways to pick an “It.” Some players LOVE to be It, and some would prefer someone else to go first. We like to allow an “opt out freely” rule to any challenge. With small groups, we like to ask for volunteers knowing that throughout the session everyone will get a chance to be it. When there are a lot of players who all eagerly want to go first, we like to use some kind of random “It-Picking” activity like...

- *You Start:* The easiest way is for the adult/facilitator to be the first IT and let the game pick the next IT.
- *Alphabet:* The facilitator calls for the player who’s last name would fall next in the alphabet after the letter _____.
- *Ace High:* Deal playing cards out to players WITH ONLY ONE ACE in the deck. The player with the Ace is It.
- *They Say It’s Your Birthday:* Think of a random date and disclose the date to the group. The player with the birthday closest to the date you stated is It.

We like to ask players in small groups to point to someone they want to be the leader. After some laughter and posturing, they pick a leader. Then we tell the leaders that their only job is to decide who will be IT... a funny curve ball that lets the “victim” turn the tables.

Group Up

Many games require players to form groups. There are many fair ways to form random groups of players while avoiding the angst embedded in “being picked” or “being excluded” or “being welcomed” and eliminating cliques. Our favorites fall in to a category we call “Barnyards.” In the original version of this game we gave all players a barnyard animal for them to pretend to be. We gave them their barnyard identities by whispering “cow” in their ear, giving them a slip of paper with “pig” written on it, or (our favorite), giving them tiny plastic toy animals to hold during the next step. On “Go” the players close their eyes and make the sounds of their assigned animal and finding their fellow barn animals by grouping together (raising their collective volume of moo’ing, oinking, etc).

Barnyard Variations:

- ***I'm Puzzled:*** Gather enough puzzles with large pieces, the quantity consistent with the size of groups you want to form (10 piece puzzles for groups of 10). Mix up all the pieces. Give all participants a piece. On “Go” they roam around and form groups by assembling their puzzles.
- ***Lifesavers:*** You’ll need a bag of wrapped lifesaver candies – multi colors. Give each player a lifesaver. On “Go” they put the candies on their tongues, stick out their tongues and mingle around forming groups of like color.
- ***Coins:*** You’ll need a bunch of cheap plastic coins (or tokens or chips). Players each get a coin and form groups of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Our favorite variation is having them form groups of say... \$57 cents!
- ***Playing Cards:*** Each player gets a card and forms groups of Aces, 1’s, 2s, etc. OR form groups of Hearts, Diamonds, Spades, and Clubs.
- ***Legos:*** Find Lego or similar building bricks and select sizes/colors to represent the desired group sizes. Give each player a different size/color brick. On “Go” players form groups of same size/color bricks. OR even cooler... Make Lego structures using the same number of bricks as the number of

players you want in each group. Make the same number of structures as the number of groups you want to form – plus some extras to have as samples. Players form groups by replicating the samples.

- ***Toothpaste Barnyard:*** Everyone thinks of their favorite brand of toothpaste (or detergent, dream car, animal, snack food, etc). On “GO” everyone calls out their name and gather in similar teams. Can be used to get learners into work/discussion groups.

Circle Up

Many games require players to Circle Up. Our favorite way to form a circle is to ask players to touch fingers, hands, or elbows depending on the spacing we want between players.

If we want a tight spacing (the Hippy), we have them put their hands on their HIPS and touch elbows with their neighbors.

If we want a looser spacing (the Egyptian), we have them put their arms at their sides with their wrists shoulder high and their hands and fingers pointing towards their neighbors. They touch fingers as they do the Egyptian pose.

If we want an even looser spacing (the T-Bone), they extend their arms fully out to their right, doing the T-bone pose, and touch fingers with their neighbors.

Pair Up

Some games require players to Pair Up. We don't like to do a lot of games that require pairs or an exact number of players because this always runs the risk of creating an "odd man out." During these grouping there are always players looking for a group to belong to but being rejected because of the strict numerical requirement. We think this is unnecessary emotional STUFF that can get in the way of the process.

If the logistics of the activity don't absolutely require a set number of people, we suggest giving a little flexibility. Say, "Get into groups of two or three/five or six."

If we want to do an activity that would work much better in pairs or any specific number because of the logistics of the activity, you can alleviate some of the emotional STUFF by saying something like, "Try to form pairs – only two people in a group. Now... we might have an uneven number of... ODD people in the group

(pause for laughs). If we do have an odd number of people, then one group of 3 is OK. I'll come and give that group special instructions.”

Often you find a couple of odd men out and can pair them up. The facilitator can also step into or out of the game to ensure there is no odd man out.

Name Games for the FORMING stage

In the forming stage, kids are testing the environment, the staff, and the other kids to identify boundaries and normal behaviors. It is the orientation stage. In this stage kids are learning the social skills of confidence and curiosity. They are discovering relationships with leaders and group members and learning about the “culture” or pre-existing standards of the group. They are getting acquainted, discovering what’s what, who’s who and where they fit in.

Name games help children through this stage by helping them to know the names of the staff and other kids in this new group. In this stage children want to know all the new people in the group, but may be too shy to initiate a conversation. Name games help them by facilitating the initial meet and greet, and answering the initial question – “Who are these people?”

Acrostic Names

Pair Up. Each player writes his first name on a piece of paper and exchanges it with his partner. After a minute or two getting to know each other, each player makes up a sentence with words starting with the letter of the other player's name. For example: MIKE: Monkeys Imagine Kindness on Earth.

Action Names

Circle Up. In turn, players say their names and give an action that represents them. Chelsea always says, “My name is Chelsea and I play the Cello” while making the motion of playing the cello. After each player, the entire team says “Hi Chelsea who plays the cello!” and performs the action. Use sports, foods, hobbies, or anything else as the basis for the action. Variation: Players each choose an action for every syllable of their name. Example: Chelsea has two syllables, so she slides her bow over her strings out (Chel) – and back (sea) – for the two syllables.

Animal Name Game

Circle Up. Players think of an animal whose name begins with the same letter as their first name (with younger children, any animal name will do). Then they go around the circle, introducing

themselves by their animal name and first name. Chelsea Cheetah, Monkey Mike, etc. Repeat, but this time the first player says their own name, the second player says the first player's and their own name, the third player says the first two people's name and their own name, and so on...until the last player attempts to say everyone's name in order ending with their own name. Repeat this time going the opposite direction. Variation: Have each player describe him/herself by using the first letter of his/her name. For example: My name is Chelsea and I like Cheetos & Cheerios, and my favorite animal is a Cheetah.

Bumpity Bump Bump

Circle Up. Choose an IT. IT goes up to someone in the circle and says, "left," "right," or "yours." That player must say the name of the player to the right, left or their own respectively before IT says, "bumpity bump bump." If the player in the circle fails to say the correct name, they are the new IT.

Concentration

Circle Up. Pick a Leader. The rhythm for the game is slap, slap (on the knees), snap, snap (one on each hand -right, then left). The leader sets the pace. The object of the game is to get to the leader's spot. The leader begins the rhythm, and

on one set of snaps says his/her name on the first and someone else's on the second (the names MUST always be said on the two snaps). The player whose name is said must respond on the next set of slaps and snaps by saying his/her own name and then someone else's. If the player does it correctly, the game continues. If the player does not do it quickly enough, that player must move to the seat to the right of the leader, and the rest of the team moves up a seat (toward the leader's spot) to fill in the seats. Game continues until team has learned names well. The pace can be as fast as desired.

Instant Replay

Circle Up. This is a variation of Action Names. Each player introduces self to the group and does a body motion that represents something about them (a hobby like skiing). In this variation, everyone in the group imitates exactly what each player does – name, vocal tone, body movement - EVERYTHING. Continue until everyone has a turn.

Look at Me

Circle Up. Players look around at each other until they make eye contact with someone. Once eye contact is established, the two players walk to the

center (maintaining eye contact), shake hands, and introduce themselves. They then continue across the circle, switching places with each other. The aim of the game is for each player to meet as many different people as possible. Players want to switch spots with as many people as they can in the time given (usually a minute is sufficient).
Variation: To change the activity, have players share a different fact in the center of the circle. Some examples are: how many siblings he or she has, a favorite sport, or favorite ice cream. You can also change up the center activity by adding an action. Each player has to dance to the middle, or try and make the other player laugh in crossing. Have fun with it and be creative. Talk about how eye-contact is a social skill and how in some cultures it conveys respect and in some situations it conveys disrespect.

Mime a Name

Mime a Name is another variation of Action Names. Circle up arms distance apart. Ask each player to think of a verb and action that starts with the same letter as their first name e.g., "Chelsea plays the Cello". On their turn, the players do the action **WITHOUT TALKING**. Everyone then guesses the action and then repeats the action and says the action-name out loud.

Name Roulette

Pick a Leader. Form two equal circles, one inside the other. Set the circles up so one player from each circle is physically standing back to back to one member from the other circle. (I use a spot on the ground to mark the spot for each circle). These circles both start moving in clockwise motion, ensuring each member of the circle passes through the "spot". The leader calls stop. At that point the people on each spot must turn around and face each other. The player who names the other first wins that round and the "loser" joins the other circle.

Nametag Novelties

Give players a nametag and a marker. Ask them to print their name on the upper portion of the nametag and then to draw three objects that represent who they are on the bottom portion of the tag. After completing the activity, ask players to share their names and what they drew on their tags. (i.e. My name is Mike and I drew a musical note, a football, and a fork because I love listening to music; I'm a big football fan; and I love to eat.)

Name Tag

Circle up. Stand with hands out and palms-up. Go around the circle and each player says his or her

name loudly. Pick an IT to begin in the center of the circle - the mush pot. IT is trying to get out of the mush pot while the rest of the team is playing a version of keep away using each other's names. Play begins when one player shouts the name of someone else standing in the circle. IT has to locate the named player and give him or her a "low ten" before that named player can shout someone else's name. At no time may palms be pulled out of the way of the tag. Names bounce from player to player until IT successfully lands his or her hands down on the correct outstretched palms before another name is called. Players then switch places and start again.

Nickname Nugget

Circle Up. Players think of alliterations for their names. For example: Cheetah Chelsea, Magic Mike, Rhubarb Rose, or Nevada Nick. Start with one player and go around the circle, letting each player share their "nickname." Next Step – the team will attempt to repeat the name and alliteration of each team member in the circle. Ask for a volunteer to start by introducing him or herself. Then, the player immediately to his or her left introduces him or herself and the player who went before. Each time a player shares, he or she also introduces the people who previously shared in the circle. Encourage the team to help others

recall. Remember that the last player has the most challenging task because he or she has to recall all the names and nicknames.

Variations:

- Use Food Names (Banana Bart),
- Adjective Names (Silly Sara),
- Hobbies (Rocket-Building Rick), etc.
- Instead of alliterations, try rhyming animals and/or vegetables.
- Or, ask players to connect a motion with something he or she likes to do.

Spellin' Melon

Circle up. Players have to spell their name, letter by letter, using their melon – their head – to start! As a player carefully draws the letters in the air, the team attempts to guess the author's name. The author will go very slowly and start the next letter only when the team has correctly identified the previous letter. Go around the circle and let each player have a turn. Strongly encourage everyone to really get into the nonsense that this game promotes. Also try using other body parts for spelling. Elbows and, (dare we say) “bottoms” are especially funny.

Surprise a Name

Divide the group in half, and have each team go to opposite sides of the room. Two people hold up a sheet between two chairs facing each other in the center of the room. While the sheet is raised, have two players volunteer to sit in the facing chairs. When the sheet is lowered, the players in the chairs try to be first to shout out the name of the other player. The winning team captures the loser.

Toss a Name

Circle Up. Calls out someone's name anywhere in the circle and lofts the ball to him. That player calls out another name and lofts the ball to that player and so on until it gets back to the leader – establishing a pattern.

Variations:

- Start circle small and have people step back, expanding the circle, then move closer until it is too close to play.
- Ask the catcher to say, “Thank you Thrower’s Name.”
- Go in REVERSE order.
- Switch positions and repeat.
- Introduce a second ball or object of a different color/style/shape. They must pass

the ball in the original order and the second ball in the REVERSE order at the same time.

- We like to kick it up by using a rubber chicken or roll of toilet paper!

What's in a Name?

What's in a name? More than we often realize. This is an interesting, novel way for people to introduce themselves. Ensure that an appropriate team atmosphere is established in which people have already done some initial warm-up activities and name games. Ask small teams to sit around the perimeter of a spread out rope circle or stand while holding a rope circle. They take turns, explaining what their name means (if anything) and where it comes from. Who were they named after? Why their parents picked their name? Is there a nickname? Do family members call them something different than their friends? What they would like to be called by staff? Most people reveal a surprising amount of interesting information about where their name comes from and what it means. Can be specifically used to help build intercultural respect and understanding or to more generally help develop self-identity and open respect and sharing.

Variations:

- Ask each player to introduce his/her partner to the larger team and to explain what his/her name means and where it comes from.
- The activity can be extended into revealing the background behind other names e.g., Nicknames Pets, Alter-ego or "fantasy name,"
- Names of children - or what would you name your children if you have them?
- Our friend Jim Cain does this as people wrap a raccoon circle around their finger – it decreases stress and pressure giving them something to fiddle with.

Get-To-Know-You Games
for the
FORMING
stage

In the forming stage, kids are testing the environment, the staff, and the other kids to identify boundaries and normal behaviors. It is the orientation stage. In this stage kids are learning the social skills of confidence and curiosity. They are discovering relationships with leaders and group members and learning about the “culture” or pre-existing standards of the group. They are getting acquainted, discovering what’s what, who’s who and where they fit in.

Get-to-know-you games help children take the next steps in the Forming stage. Once they get to know WHO these new people are, they want to know a little bit more about them. The more kids know about each other, the harder it is to be mean to each other. Get-to-know-you games help to bring the members of the team a little closer through low-threat, playful activities.

Bawk, Bawk, Bawk

This is a variation of Bumpity Bump Bump. Circle up. Pick an IT. IT is the Chicken Hawk. IT goes up so someone in the circle points a rubber chicken at them and says, “left,” “right,” or “yours.” That player must say the name of the player to the right, left or their own respectively before the IT says, “Bawk, Bawk, Bawk” like a chicken. If the player in the circle fails to say the correct name, they are the new IT.

Categories

Yell out a category to the team (favorite color, ice cream, movie, birth place, pet, shoe size, etc.). The players must find all of those in the team that have that category in common with themselves. After the teams of favorite categories gather, have them give a cheer to let the rest of the team know their commonality.

Chick or Treat

Pair Up. Give each pair a Rubber Chicken. Find a space where it is safe to toss the chickens to each other. With the players facing each other, about 3' to 4' apart, have them toss the Chicken from their dominant hand to their partner's dominant hand. As they toss, they tell the other a favorite treat – any food they like to eat – a different treat each

time. When the leader calls “CHICK OR TREAT” they find a new partner.

Creative Handshakes

Pair up. Introduce selves and do a silly handshake.

- Salmon Slap: fingers are place on the inside of the forearm, almost to the elbow, and hand is slapped against the forearm
- Milkmaid: one player interlace his fingers and turn thumbs upside down, the other player milks the thumb udders!
- Lumberjack: one player extends right fist with thumb sticking up, other player extends right fist grabbing first players thumb and sticking own thumb up. Then left hand – left hand, so that all four fists are stacked up. Then they push and pull back and forth like they are cutting a tree.
- Yuppy: hold your coffee in your left hand, and cell phone to ear with your shoulder, high five with your right hand then reach down and shake ankles with your right hand all without spilling your coffee!)
- Spock: hands are connected between the middle and the ring finger
- Cool Guy: Grab hand with a wrapped grip around the thumbs and do the chest bump and back slap

Do a handshake, then have each player ask his or her partner a simple, non-threatening question like "What's the best meal you've ever had? Or "What are three things we have in common?" Find a NEW partner. With their new partners, ask players to try a different handshake and to discuss another simple question.

Finally, after about 4-5 different handshakes, do a 'Handshake Frenzy'. Call out each of the handshakes one at a time and have players quickly find and greet their partners from the previous rounds.

Finding Differences

We like to begin this one by asking players to point their finger at someone they already know. Then we ask them to point their pinky at some players they don't know or don't know very well. Now they go stand with someone they don't know very well. Players interview one another looking for as many differences as possible before they must change partners. Players ask each other questions, sharing personal tastes and views on any topic that comes to mind. Switch partners numerous times to ensure many connections, and give them enough time for both players to share

before making switch. On debrief, ask the players what differences and similarities they discovered most often. Ask questions like: Do you feel as if you know each other better than before and in what way do you believe stronger connections were made? How will this new information affect your relationship with this player? In what ways did these disclosures make you curious and interested in learning more about another player? Variation: Instead of finding differences through questioning one another, ask players to share their “30-second life story.” When players partner-up, they condense their life history into 30 seconds. Each player takes a turn to share and then finds a new partner. Or, for culminating experience, ask players to find one thing they all have in common.

Guess Who

Best for smaller teams. Each player writes down on a scrap of paper a little-known fact about him or herself (the more unusual, the better). These are then read and everyone tries to guess who it is. A prize can be given to the player who guesses the most correctly.

Haven't We Met

Players write their first name on an index card. Players walk around and engage each other in

conversation by saying, “Haven’t we met?” The player that they approached responds with, “No, I don’t believe we have.” The first player responds, “My name is [stating the name appearing on the card].” The second player would respond, “My name is [again, whatever name appears on the card].” The two people exchange cards, and state to each other, “Now, I am [the player’s name on their new card].” Players continue to mingle, switching cards and identities with each conversation partner. The encounters continue until each player receives his or her own name (original note card) back. When a player meets someone with his or her name card, that player has finished the activity and becomes a coach helping others to “find themselves.” Variation: Have players write their own name and one fact (unique interest, great experience, curious hobby, amazing accomplishment, unknown talent, or strange eyewitness) about themselves on their card, the more interesting and funny- the better. Then, when players introduce themselves, they also must reveal the “fun-fact” on the card about the player whose identity they have adopted. The game will often turn on conversations about these facts. If you want to increase the fun, ask players to state the fact on the card and then embellish the story. Each subsequent player then states the fact and all subsequent embellishments he or she was told before note cards (or identities) were switched, and each player adds more to the story.

Players need to explain the fact as if they did it, and be convincing for the other player. By the time the note card returns to its owner, players may barely recognize the original fact after all the embellishments are shared. Typically players begin to laugh hysterically when another player introduces himself or herself with the original player's name, fact, and now hilarious embellishments to the original fact.

Human Treasure Hunt/Bingo

Prepare items for your BINGO grid ahead of time such as...is born in the same month as you...can speak a foreign language...has performed anything etc. For children, use items like...has a pet (what is it)...has been on a cool vacation (where)...hates/loves to eat vegetables...has the same number of siblings as you...was born in the same month as you, etc. Put these on a BINGO grid and play. The object is to mingle and record names and information for each item on the list, using only one player for each item.

_____ has five or more siblings	_____ can speak a foreign language	_____ has performed anything	_____ has been elected to a position	_____ volunteers for an organization
_____ has met someone famous	_____ has run a marathon	_____ had the same breakfast as you	_____ has the same shoe size	_____ has same “favorite” age child to work with
_____ has the same favorite season	_____ has been on TV	_____ has the same favorite sense	_____ has an exotic pet	_____ loves the same music as you
_____ likes a sport you like too	_____ can play a musical instrument	_____ has same favorite dessert	_____ works at different site than you	_____ has the same favorite author
_____ was born in the same month as you	_____ has the same favorite food as you	_____ has a different religious belief	_____ someone I just met for first time	_____ can do a silly human trick (wiggle ears)

Have You Ever?

This is a musical chairs-style game. Circle up fairly tightly and give each player a placeholder to stand on (gym spot, carpet circle, paper plate). The leader says, “I’m going to ask the question ‘Have You Ever_____’ and use an unusual example of an experience that I have personally had in the past. For example, Have you ever gone downhill skiing wearing only a swim suit? If any of you have ALSO had this experience, you must leave your place and find a new place. I will take the first empty space I see, so the last player out – the one who doesn’t find a place, is the new ‘IT.’ The new IT will ask a new Have You Ever question. Let’s do this safely. No running. No body-checking, kicking or pinching. OK. I’ll start... “Have you ever.....?”

iPhoto

Pair Up. One player in each pair closes their eyes (camera). The other guides them to what they think is a nice picture (photographer). To take a picture, photographers say, “click.” The cameras open their eyes. Chat & switch.

Inside-Outside Circle

Form two circles, one inside the other, with equal numbers in each circle. Each player on the inside

pairs up with one from the outside circle. The leader gives them a topic to talk about for a couple of minutes, then the inside circle rotates clockwise to pair up with a different player. The leader gives a new topic... repeat until all on the inside circle have been paired with each player on the outside. Some topics to talk about include: favorite movie, favorite book, favorite video game, etc. Objects of the game are for players to get to know one another a little better and to practice oral communication skills.

Meet & Greet Three

The leader says meet and shake hands with three people who...are wearing the color blue, has longer hair than you do, are wearing similar shoes, etc.

Mike Trivia

Pick a kid, any kid. Say we pick Mike. Announce to the team that it is time for Mike Trivia. Ask the whole team to guess different things about Mike, i.e., What is his favorite color? Let the first player reveal the truths and then move on to the next player.

More, Nuther, Done!

Pair Up. Explain that one player will be sharing a fact about himself or herself in a single sentence. The other partner will direct the conversation. For example: Mike may say, "I have two crazy beagles at home." His partner Chelsea may respond, "more," "nuther," or "done." "More" means she wants to hear more about the two dogs. "Nuther" means she wants a new fact. "Done" means she is satisfied with the sharing on that topic. The sharing player may also say "done" at any time. When one of the partners calls "done," they switch roles. After both partners have shared, have them find new partners.

Pair Share

A great way to get people talking comfortably to people they don't know or to raise the level of engagement within a team that does know each other. Ask players to stand up, move about the room (don't just turn to the player next to them), and find a partner who they don't know or who they know the least of anyone else in the room. Once everyone is in pairs (if you have an odd number, one team can be a threesome), the facilitator says: "You will have two minutes to discuss the following topic with your partner..." Ideas for discussion: Find three things you and

your partner have in common. Describe for your partner the first job you ever held. What would you do if you won the lottery? What are your most favorite and least favorite things about working for this organization? Players then find a new partner and told they will be given a new topic. This cycle can be repeated two or three times. Variation: Give them a few minutes to interview each other and then have them introduce one another to the team. This allows two people to get to know each other quickly and form a friendship. It's often easier for people to talk about others than themselves. Variation: have them chat about goals – call it a Goal Stroll!

Putting it Together

Cut a puzzle out of poster paper ahead of time (one piece for each player). Players decorate their piece to represent who they are and what they feel they can contribute to the team. Once players are done, they share what they have on their piece. Players then assemble the puzzle. Facilitator initiates a discussion on the power of everyone coming together, how much more of an impact a put together puzzle can have, than separate pieces, and how a final product couldn't be reached without a contribution from every player.

See Ya!

Get in teams of 5-6. Players introduce themselves, and listen for the question. The leader asks something like “Who has the longest hair?” The teams decide who is the correct player for each team. They dismiss that player to find a new team by saying, “See YA!” Then all players try to recruit a new player from all those dismissed from their teams by shouting “OVER HERE!” and motioning for new player to join their team. Then another question and another round of play. Here are some of our favorites to start you off with:

- Who is wearing the most jewelry?
- Who has watches the most movies this month?
- Who has the most books in their personal collection?
- Who is the youngest?
- Who has the most living family members?
- Who has the most letters in their last name?
- Who has the most experience working with kids?
- Who is wearing the cleanest shoes?
- Who is tallest?

Snowballs

Players write a few things about themselves on a piece of scrap paper (favorite television show,

how many people in their family). Once they have completed the paper they crumble the paper into a ball. Circle Up. On “GO” children throw snowballs into the center. One child picks up a snowball and reads out loud. The rest try to guess who the correct player is.

Thumbball

You’ll need to modify a beach ball(s) for this game. Using a permanent marker, divide the beach ball into more sections by drawing three “longitudinal” lines. If you use a large beach ball, draw one at the equator, and the other two above and below it. If using a mini beach ball, one line on the equator should work. A standard soccer ball could also work. The point is to make sections that are big enough to write phrases in them. On “GO” children pass the ball around the circle or in a pattern, bouncing around the circle until everyone gets a turn. The child who catches the beach ball must provide a response to the phrase that is closest to his right thumb.

Variation: he can choose to respond to either phrase closest to either thumb. Here are some sample phrases to write on the beach ball sections. They are arranged from basic getting-to-know-you questions to deeper questions to use once trust has been established.

- Favorite food

- People who make you laugh
- Favorite toy
- Fantasy vacation
- Favorite sport
- Ideal transportation
- Favorite game
- Pet lover?
- Favorite music
- People you admire
- Favorite TV show
- Story of your name
- Favorite candy
- Most loved season
- Favorite movie
- Preferred board game
- Favorite color
- Your hero
- Famous person to meet
- Favorite field trip
- Best video game
- Favorite dessert
- Birthday wish
- Favorite animal
- Best book
- Favorite cartoon
- Hobby you enjoy
- Best holiday

- Favorite word
- Best place
- Favorite store
- Favorite restaurant
- Best school subject
- Where are you from?
- Where have you been?
- What is the story of your name?
- What do you love?
- What are your hopes and dreams?
- Complete this sentence. “We were put on this earth to...”
- Who do you think needs more help, the homeless or endangered animals?
- What are some of your favorite organizations that help others?
- Do you believe: “Love thy neighbor as thyself?”
- What is the most rewarding thing someone has ever done for you?
- When was the last time you had to say “I’m sorry” to someone?
- Describe your perfect day.
- If you could have a conversation with any animal, which one would it be and why?
- When we talk to animals, do you think they understand us?

- Which do you usually listen to, your head or your heart?
- What is one thing you have always wanted to do? to get?
- When you think about getting older, what do you look forward to?
- If you were given one hour of homework to do, every night for the next five years, which subject would you choose?
- If you could learn something new tomorrow and succeed at it for life what would it be?
- If you were climbing a mountain who would you bring with you & why?
- What is more important, knowledge or imagination?
- Where do you like to go when you have to solve a problem?
- When you hear the word “unfair” what do you think of?
- What is one thing that always cheers you up when you are sad?
- What is the difference between wants and needs?
- What would you do if you won the lottery and had only one day to spend the money?
- What is the difference between wishing and realizing your dreams?
- If you could invent one thing that could make the world a better place what would it be?

- What is the difference between peace and getting along?
- What makes you know you can trust someone?
- If you were to choose a new name for yourself, what would it be?
- What is your dream job?
- What do you do for fun?
- What's the biggest lesson you've learned from your past relationships?
- What are your best traits?
- What's one of your worst habits?
- What makes someone a good friend?
- Who is the biggest influence in your life?
- What are you wearing today which is most reflective of who you are?
- What is the craziest thing you have ever done?
- What is your most embarrassing moment?
- If suddenly you had lots and lots and LOTS of money, would you have the same friends and the same worries, the same goals, the same dreams?
- If you could change one habit what would it be?
- If you could change one thing about the world what would it be?
- What nice thing do people seem to tell you about yourself?

- What is the definition of strong?
- People who _____ have the most courage in the world?
- What subject makes your brain ache?
- What do you always need help with?
- When you hear the word “competition” how do you feel?
- Talk about the most important thing you learned this year.
- Describe your personality.
- What are the easiest and hardest emotions for you to express and why?
- What is something that few people know about you?
- Who is your role model?
- What do you value in a friend?
- What do you want to be doing in five years?
- Describe your room.
- What is one goal you have for next year?
- What is a motto you try to live by?
- What is the greatest challenge you are facing?
- What do you like most about yourself?
- What do you value in a caring relationship?
- What do you value most?

This or That

Possibly one of the greatest needs within a team is to identify what unites the members of the team. To this end, the goal here is to identify some commonalities shared by various members of the team. Designate one side of the room as “THIS,” and the other side of the room as “THAT.” All players stand in the middle of the empty room. Ask them to make a choice and move with the others who share that choice. Encourage talking as they move. Ask questions pointing to the THIS side of the room when you say the first choice and pointing to the THAT side of the room when you say the other choice. After choosing sides, give team members a minute to see who is on the same side of the room with them, and to discuss why they chose this particular side. Some of the following decisions are fairly easy and the information content doesn’t have severe consequences. Others may make or break the team. We like to customize our list based on the content of the day for example customer service questions when we are working on customer service. Here are some of our favorites to get you started.

- Which do you like more, Chocolate cake (THIS) OR white cake (THAT)
- Are you a Macintosh person or a PC Person?

- Are you Quiet or Loud?
- Do you identify more with: Birds OR Fish?
- Do you like to: Stay home OR Go out?
- Do You Enjoy Running or Walking?
- Do you consider yourself more of a: Follower OR a Leader?
- Would you enjoy more: Sky Diving or Deep Sea Diving?
- Which would you like more: a Juicy Steak OR a New Pair of Shoes?
- Are you a Problem Solver or a Problem Maker?
- Do you Normally Save Money or Spend Money?
- Are you better at remembering: Names OR Numbers?
- Do you more often: Speak your mind OR Hold your tongue?
- Would you rather have: A million dollars OR great happiness for life?
- Do you prefer Hamburgers & Hotdogs or Chicken or Salad?
- Are you comfortable with a fixed schedule or with flex time?
- Would you prefer a: Ski weekend in the Mountains OR a weekend on a Beach?
- Would you rather: Curl up with a Book OR Go to a Movie?

- Would you rather: Eat Liver OR Go to a dentist?
- Do you prefer: Hot days OR Cold days?
- Would you rather go to a: Football Game OR an Opera?
- Do you prefer: Showers OR Baths?
- Are you better in Math OR English?

Toilet Paper Game

Ask players how many squares they want, but don't tell them why (limit 5 – 50). Give them the number of squares asked for. Each player says one thing about self for each square until they are finished. The first square has to be their name.

Two Truths & A Lie

Each player thinks of two things that are true (and interesting or funny) about themselves and one thing that is not true (but might also be interesting or funny if it was)! Each player tells their list to the others as if they are all true. The team tries to guess which is a lie.

Uncommon Commonalities

Form teams of 3-4. Have the people find the most uncommon thing they all have in common - the weirdest thing that they all have in common.

Wal-Mart

Circle Up. Say your name and what object in Wal-Mart that you are most like and describe why. (i.e. My name is Mike and I am most like a pair of work boots because I like to be comfortable and don't really care about whether others like the fashion statement I make with them).

Who are You

Team brainstorms a list of questions they would want to know about a player (What is your favorite TV show? What is your most embarrassing moment? Who are your Heroes?) Team mingles and asks questions and records (or remembers) the answers.

Waiting Games

for the Attempting Stage:

After kids get to know the names and a little more about each other, they begin attempting to take the next steps toward a sense of community. New standards and new roles begin to emerge. In the attempting stage, kids are learning the social skills of control and coping. They are making friends, building relationships and defining boundaries and expectations.

As children play low threat games together, they begin to develop some group cohesion. During this stage children sometimes struggle in down times when they are waiting for the next activity or waiting on a transition. They are attempting to learn the skill of patience. These games are also great when you have to keep your team in line or in close proximity while waiting (usually for the bus).

10 Count

Circle Up. Your team must count to ten, collectively, without any two people saying a number at the same time and with no verbal planning. This will get your team to cooperate & focus. Explain that no talking or planning is allowed. For example, one player starts by shouting “one,” and another player shouts “two” and so on. When two or more people speak simultaneously, the entire team must start back at zero.

2 Grunts

In this activity, grunts are passed around the circle. Any player can pass to anyone. The way a grunt is passed is by making 2 grunts while your hands make certain motions. On the first grunt, your hands are together and in a prayer-like position and they start out high above the head and come down closer to you. On the second grunt, the hands go from the chest towards someone (pointing to them so they know it is their turn next). Players must make creative sounds. No one ever gets out – they should just laugh!!

A – Z in 60 Seconds

Circle Up. Pick an IT. IT begins by saying something that begins with the letter “A.” It can

be a single item (like ANY word), or something with a theme (like something you would bring on a trip) – “Apple.” It can be the first line in a story – “A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...” or it could be a question – “Are you OK?” The second player in the circle says something – a word “Baggage,” a next phrase in the story, “Before the dawn of man on Earth...” or a question, “Beg you pardon?” The third player takes the letter “C” and so on. For accomplished players, challenge the team to 60 seconds to get the letter “Z.”

Everybody’s It Tag

Everybody is it! If you get tagged, sit down (or stand still). When everyone is sitting (or standing still), play again. Variation: when you get tagged, remember who tagged you. When that player is tagged, you are back in!

Find the Thing

Circle up, shoulder to shoulder. One player stands in the middle with their eyes open. The leader walks around the outside of the circle and drops a small object (like a rock) into one player’s hands. The players in the circle must pass the object around behind their backs, trying to conceal from the middle player who has the object. The middle

player has three tries to pick out who has the object.

Ghosts in the Graveyard

This is a great game for waiting in quiet places. Pick an IT – the crypt-keeper. All players lay on the floor in any position. Ensure enough space so they don't touch each other. Give everyone time to get comfortable. On "GO" they must stay still and silent. If the chosen crypt-keeper catches any movement, the player moving becomes the next crypt-keeper. If you don't like the name you can rename it Mannequin and play it standing.

Go Tag

Teams line up. Every other player facing opposite directions. Choose an IT & a player to be chased. IT chases the chased around the line of people in either direction. IT can trade off with a player in line by touching them on the back & saying, "chase." The chased player can also switch at any time by touching someone in line on the back & yelling, "run."

Is That All?

You'll need some natural items from your setting. Circle up and sit cross-legged. Choose one natural

item and give it to one of the players. The player must say something about the item, then should pass it to the player next to them, who has to say something about the item, etc. The observations can be factual, subjective, poetic, sensory, etc.; the only rule is that you can't repeat someone else's observation.

Line Ups

Without talking, team lines up in order of age, birth month, alphabetical, height, shoe size, number of siblings, number of glasses of water you drink per day, introversion / extraversion, how tired / alert you feel, number of different countries you've visited. We like to give them a name of a holiday – they line up in order holidays appear on calendar. Add other challenges like a blind fold for some teams. Sneak in some history – give them important historical events – they line up in chronological order.

Pass It

Circle up. Players work to pass a clapping sound around the circle quickly. One player “gives” a clap to the next player. That player “receives” the sound by clapping at the same time, then turns to pass the clap to the next player in the circle. Start slowly; if players are way off, start again. Let the

sound move continuously around the circle numerous times to get the team into it, gaining speed as they get the hang of it. Once players establish a good rhythm, stop play and restart again with two claps. Do this by introducing a second clap right after the first. Now players must be very alert to make it work. Set a goal as to how many claps they can get around the circle and back to where they started. Allow many opportunities for practice. Variation: Introduce to the team new sounds and new rhythms. For example, add a snap or a foot stomp. Or, pass a high five around the circle.

Perfect Square

Your team must try to keep you at the center of their perfect square. No matter where you move or how you turn, players must remain in the same orientation to you as when they started. Players need to form four equal lines to create a perfect square around you. Players must work to keep the perfect square intact no matter where or how you move. Each line of the square is a team racing to be the first in position every time you change positions or physically move. Lines must always be in the same order, location, and proximity to you as when they started. The line to your front must always be to your front, the line to your back

to your back, and left and right sides to your left and right. Each line of players signals that they are in correct position by holding up their hands together and yelling “done!” Be creative. Have fun with this by moving across the room, spinning in circles and trying to confuse the team.

Variation: Introduce different shapes into the exercise such as triangles, hexagons, trapezoids, and other fun shapes.

Quick-Change Artist

Tell the team they will need to be keen observers. Have them close their eyes for 15 seconds while you change one thing about yourself: your hair, sleeve, watch, etc. Tell them to open their eyes and guess what you changed. Keep adding changes or let someone who observes the change be the quick-change artist.

Run & Scream

With everyone lined up in a straight line pick one player to be it. On “GO” that player runs around and screams until they are out of breath. It has to be one continuous scream. That player catches their breath and calls on another player. Use judgment about appropriate locations for this one.

Sit Down

All players stand up. The object of the game is to be the last player standing. It says things like: Sit down if your mom has pierced ears. Sit down if you changed your underwear this morning. Sit down if you are wearing black. Sit down if you pick your nose. Players who sit down remain seated until the next game.

Sounds

Sit quietly on the ground – eyes closed. Listen. As the players hear sounds, they can keep count on their fingers of how many, different sounds they hear. After an appropriate time, the leader can end the activity. On debrief, discuss and describe all the different sounds, to explore the origin of certain sounds, or do a poetry session.

Stand Still Tag

Everyone gathers in close. Throughout the game everyone must stand still. Tag someone and the game begins. (It is fun, but gets old pretty quick).

Triangle Tag

Arrange into teams of four (allow one or more teams to be five, to include everyone). Choose one player to be IT. The others link arms to form

a triangle. The Its from each team step back from the teams while each teams picks someone to be chased. On “GO” the triangle spins to protect the chased player. The triangle must not detach. If the player is tagged, he/she is the new IT.

What are you doing?

Players form a long line. Player starts miming an activity. Player 2 asks, “What are you doing?” The first player answers something that does NOT resemble what he’s actually doing. E.g. if player 1 is cutting someone’s hair, when asked what he’s doing he might say, “I’m reading the newspaper.” First player moves away, and the second player mimes the activity stated by the previous player. A third player comes up to player 2, asks what he is doing, and so on. Play until everyone has mimed something, and has answered the question.

Variation: You can also play this at super high speed, with 2 players. We mean super-super high speed. As soon as one of the players says, “ummm,” hesitates, or uses an offer that was used before in that session, that player is replaced.

Great for warm-up and energy!

**Low-Threat
Low-Risk
Games
for the
Storming Stage:**

In childhood there is frequent conflict and polarization as children are learning patience, and coping skills. During the Attempting stage there is also a lot of Storming. There is some resistance to group influence and some posturing as children learn their place in the pecking order of the playground. In the Storming stage kids are learning self-control and conflict resolution skills. They are balancing their autonomy with responsibility to the team. They often have emotional responses and resistance to group tasks.

The low-threat and low-risk games in this section help children take the next steps toward true teamwork by helping them to learn self-control and conflict resolution. These games are playful yet just challenging enough to require some degree of teamwork to be fun and successful. But they are simple enough for the team to be successful in spite of a little storming.

3 Foot, 6 Foot, 9 Foot

Start by secretly identifying a player in the team and move to a position that is 9 feet from him or her. Allow time for your team to adjust positions. Next, ask your team to secretly pick a second player. While remaining 9 feet from the first player, ask them to move to a position that is 6 feet from the second player. Finally, while keeping the first two distances, ask everyone to pick a third player in the team and move to a position that is 3 feet from the third player. Allowing the team to struggle and walk around in circles will prompt excellent topics for conversation. Round 1: Explain to your team that they should do everything in secret, trying not to let their chosen people know who they are. Round 2: Ask your team to identify themselves to their 3, 6, and 9 foot people. Now by talking to their 3, 6, and 9 foot people, see if they can successfully move into the final configuration.

Balance

Partner Up. Stand, facing each other, about a foot-and-a-half apart. Partners should put their hands together, palm-to-palm. On “Go,” the pairs will attempt to force the other player to lose her or his balance. The motions should be slow and consistent, and hands must remain in contact with palms flat. Let pairs play a few rounds and then

have them find another partner. In the second round, partners' hands should not be touching. Yet, as they did before, players maneuver to push their partners off balance, but this time with soft bursts of hand-to-hand nudges. Players may also pull back as their partner pushes, causing them to falter forward. Allow your team to play many times using both variations for maximum fun and entertainment.

Continental Divide

Have the team form a straight line – shoulder to shoulder. Tell them that their shoes are fused to the player's shoe to their right and left. In this formation have the team move from point A to point B. If anyone disconnects shoes, the team comes back to point A.

Evolution/Morph

This is a fun game that can be played with an unlimited number of players. Everyone begins their life in this game as an egg. They roam around the room with their arms raised above their heads in an egg-shaped loop to signify that they are an egg. They find someone to play ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS with. Almost everyone knows how to play this game, but a quick review and consensus on the rules might be

in order before beginning. The winner of this game becomes a chicken and the loser remains an egg. The chickens put their hands under their armpits to make chicken wings and chicken walk around the room to find another chicken or egg to play another game of ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS with. Any winning chickens evolve into dinosaurs, signified by holding their tiny T-Rex arms out in front of them, making dinosaur sounds and walking around the room like a dinosaur. Any losing chickens devolve back into eggs. More roaming and another round of ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS...this time winning dinosaurs evolve into superheroes (arm out and flying around the room like superman). Once someone evolves into a superhero, they cannot devolve – once a superhero, always a superhero. Everyone else evolves and devolves based on the ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS outcome. Stop the game when it is still fun!

Fly Swatter

You'll need a fly swatter, shaving cream, and a blindfold. This game is similar to pin the tail on the donkey. It is best played outside. Squirt out a dollop of shaving cream on the wall. Give the first child a fly swatter and blindfold her. Spin her around three times and let her try to swat the shaving cream dollop with the fly swatter.

Giants Wizards Elves

Two teams line up, facing each other. Teams then huddle up secretly and decide if they will be giants, wizards or elves. Giants beat the wizards, wizards beat the elves, and elves beat the giants. When a decision is made, teams return to face one another and they all yell out which creature they are displaying the sign for the character they chose (Giants = arms straight out above head, standing on tip toes; Wizard = arms straight out in front, in a swaying motion, one foot in front of the other leg stance: Elves = hands on head making ears with two fingers, squatting down. The team displaying the dominant sign chases the members of the other team, trying to tag them before they reach their predetermined SAFE back line boundary. If a player is tagged, they become part of the other team.

Happy Handful Relay

Form two teams of 10 players each. Collect 10 items, 2 of each item. Make items as novel as possible. Some ideas are: balls, orange cones, books, dice, hats, toys, etc. Stack one of each item into two stacks on two chairs on one side of the room. Line teams up “relay style” on the other side of the room. On “GO” the first player in each team runs and grabs one item from the chair, brings it back and hands it to the next player in

line. That player takes the item and runs and grabs an additional item from the chair, brings both items back to the next player in line. This continues, as each player must carry an additional item. If a player drops an item(s), he must place the item(s) back on the chair. Game continues until one player carries all items back to the team.

In the Freezer

Divide players evenly into two teams. Divide room in half by placing cones or a rope down the middle. Place about 5 trashcans or tubs around each half of the room (the goals). Give each team about 20 rolled socks or playland-type balls. On “GO,” players try to toss balls into the other team’s goals. Players may defend their goals with their hands, but cannot stand in front of goals. Team with the most balls wins.

Match Face

Pair Pp. Players must match three crazy faces. Our favorites: the monkey, the scream, & the down-block. But don’t let our examples limit you from your own whacky creations. Players stand back to back. On the count of three, partners spin simultaneously around to face each other and perform one of three faces. If they match, they play again trying to match the two remaining faces

on your list. For example, if they both performed the monkey face, they would not have to do that face again. If they don't match, they simply get back to back and try again. Players continue on their own until they have successfully matched all three faces. Players mustn't tell each other what face to perform or what face they will show. Players cannot suddenly change their face during mid-turn (when they are turning to face the other player) merely to match their partners. Once a pair has matched all three faces, they can group up with another pair and try it in a team of four. You can continue to grow the circle of "face matchers" until the entire team is split into three subgroups, with each subgroup planning their face.

Nervous Breakdown

Circle up with hands behind backs. One player (starting with the adult) is "IT," and stands in the middle with an easily catchable ball. IT tosses the ball (underhand) to individuals in the circle. If the player catching the ball misses it, he must sit down (remaining in the circle). It may also "fake out" an individual by pretending to toss the ball. If the player catching the ball moves his hands from behind his back to catch the ball that wasn't thrown, he must also sit down. Anyone who catches the ball or the last player standing gets to be IT for the next game.

Numbered Chairs

Line up as many chairs as there are players, in a row one chair facing the back of another. Tape a number on the back of each chair, starting with number 2. When players are all seated, the child in the first chair yells out a number between 2 and the number of players. The player whose number is called must call out another number within 5 seconds. If he fails to do so, or calls out a number that is not included, he moves to the last chair, and everyone else moves up a chair.

Poop Deck

Clearly mark off three sections of the activity area with chalk or tape boundaries. Label one area the Poop Deck, one the Quarter Deck and the other the Main Deck. Choose someone to be "It" Have the rest of the children go onto the Poop Deck. When It calls out the name of one of the decks (even the name of the deck that they are already standing in) the rest of the children must run to that deck. When It catches children running into a deck that he didn't call or running out of a deck that he did call, they are out. The game is over when all but one child is eliminated.

Rhythm Hunter

Circle Up. Pick an It. It will be the “Rhythm Hunter. Ask IT to move to the middle of the circle, close their eyes and cover their ears. Allow plenty of space for each player to move around. Select a “rhythm leader” and have him or her establish a rhythm. The rest of the team immediately follows. Have the “rhythm hunter” uncover his or her ears and open his or her eyes. The hunter’s job is to carefully watch the team and figure out who the leader is. The leader attempts to change the rhythm as many times as he or she can, without being detected by the rhythm hunter. The hunter has three chances to correctly identify the leader. When the hunter correctly finds the leader, or uses all three guesses, ask for another rhythm hunter and rhythm leader, and play again.

This is a duck

Circle Up. The first player turns to their right extending to the player on their right ANY object and says, “This is a duck.” The player replies, “A what?” The first player repeats, “A duck.” The second player repeats, “A what?” The first player repeats again, “A duck.” The second player replies, “Oh a duck!” and takes the object. The second player turns to the player on his/her right, extending the object – saying, “This is a duck.” At

the same time, the first player picks a new object, turns to that person on the right, and says “This is a duck.” This begins a new round or wave – eventually the whole group is passing different items in unison - a pattern

Whiz Bang

Circle Up. Get a ball or any object to pass around in a circle – call it an energy orb. The orb is passed in any direction by handing it to the next player, saying “Whiz!” The orb continues in that direction until it is “Banged!” by someone who refuses to take it. It then whizzes off in the opposite direction. It can also be “Vavoom”ed across the circle.

Virtual Catch

Pass out a lunch bag to each player. Ask players to roll the top of the bag down once or twice to create a good place to grip. While you explain how to hold the bag, model the grip: four fingers inside the bag, with the thumb resting on the outside. Present the imaginary ball with much fanfare. It is up to their imagination to make the ball exist. Toss this imaginary ball high in the air and position yourself to catch it forcefully in your bag. At the moment that your imaginary ball would land inside, snap your fingers inside the bag and

make a catching motion. This provides the sound and illusion that a ball truly has landed in the bag. You'll be surprised how much it sounds like a real ball landing inside the bag. Have players practice the snap a few times and offer help if needed. Now begin throwing the ball around the circle. Allow your players to be creative about the height and speed at which they throw the ball. The catcher should exaggerate their actions and adjust their improvisations based on how a player threw the ball. You can break the team into pairs and let them play catch back and forth and practice their improvisation skills. As the team begins to get more comfortable with the idea, players will start getting trickier with their throws and catches. This is a fantastic improvisational game that proves that an imagination goes a long way.

Variation: While the team is throwing their imaginary ball (especially when the ball is supposedly floating above the team), announce that the ball is a large beach ball, a balloon, or a bowling ball. See what players will drop their lunch bags to catch a bowling ball. Keep changing the ball and enjoy the fun. Some teams get pretty silly, and will change from balls to throwing imaginary cats (but no animals are actually hurt in this game!), flaming basketballs, raw eggs, and bowls of hot spaghetti. To enjoy the improvisation requires that you have fun thinking up new things to toss.

**More Challenging
Teambuilding Games
for the Transforming Stage:**

Finally, the team enters the Transforming stage when they are beginning to evolve into a highly-functioning and high-performance team. In the Transforming stage, kids are mastering conflict resolution skills and learning community building and communication skills. They are showing more flexibility. They are showing unity & “groupness” They balance independence with interdependence. Issues dealt with calmly.

During this stage, children are ready for more challenging teambuilding games like trust falls, spider webs, human knot, channels, etc. These games require them to use their emerging communication and leadership skills. These games are challenging enough to highlight further areas for growth and development.

We think it is helpful to have an imaginary situation – a pretend reason for the challenges presented in some of these games.

All Aboard

Imaginary situation: Your team must get every member up on a platform (carpet square, cardboard square, chalk outline). Do so quickly because soon the area will become filled with... a sea of hot lava, quicksand, an ocean filled with human-eating aliens - whatever. The object is for everyone to get onto the platform and off the dangerous substance while they count to 15 or sing a song like 'The More We Get Together' if you want to be really cheezy.

All Aboard (Diminishing)

Imaginary situation: Your team (of polar bears) needs to get every member of the team on the glacier (tarp) before they drown in the Arctic Ocean. You'll need a tarp for this one. On signal "All Aboard!" All players step onto the tarp so that no one is touching the ground... only the tarp. They must maintain their positions while singing a rousing round of "Row-Row- Row Your Boat" (or any silly song), then step off. But global warming means the glaciers are melting and shrinking... so fold the tarp so its size is decreased by $\frac{1}{3}$ and repeat each time folding the tarp by a fraction that will keep it challenging and fun. No one may be held... at least one foot must be in contact w/ tarp.

Blind Trust Drive

Pair up with like-size player in a flat open space. Imaginary situation: One player stands in front, arms extended like they are holding onto the steering wheel of a car (the driver). Their partner stands behind them, with their hands on the shoulders of the player in front (the backseat driver). The 'blind' driver now closes their eyes, while the sighted 'backseat' driver safely steers them around the playing area. Remember, this is not a demolition derby or bumper cars, and a facilitator may act as the local law enforcement officer if necessary! Halfway through the activity, partners switch roles, and continue. At the completion of the activity, partners can provide feedback to their backseat drivers, and tell them what they liked about working with their partner, or what they would change about the guidance offered during the activity.

Circle of Kindness

This is a good closing activity. Form a double circle with all players, with one partner facing the center of the circle, and their partner behind them (also facing the center, with their hands on the shoulders of the inner circle player). The outer circle is asked to quietly talk into the ear of the inner circle players, mentioning something important that they learned from them or

appreciated about them during the project, or a pleasant memory, or any other positive comment. The inner circle is asked to close their eyes, and only reply 'thank you' or keep silent. The outer team then moves one player to the right, and continues. When the outer team has completed the circle, they are asked to become the center team, and the process begins again for a second round.

Donut Machine

Circle up and link hands. One player has a hula-hoop on their shoulder. The challenge is for the team to pass the hoop(s) around the circle back to the player's other shoulder. We like to use segmented hula-hoops so we can make them bigger or smaller depending on the level of challenge desired.

Human Knot

This is an oldie but a goodie. Circle up. Players put one hand into the circle, and grab the hand of someone else. If there is a hand left over, someone grabs it with his or her other hand. Then everyone puts their other hand into the circle and grabs another player's hand (not the same player that they are holding the other hands with). It is possible to form more than one circle, so to

ensure there is only one circle, send a “wave.” One player starts by squeezing one hand and that person squeezes their opposite hand sending a wave through the team until the first player’s opposite hand is squeezed. If the wave revealed a single circle, the challenge is to untie the knot without releasing hands. On debrief talk about how we have to solve problems while maintaining a connection to others at work and what happens when we are not connected to others or to the world around us?

Hot Chocolate River

First create your hot chocolate river. We usually use two ropes to represent the banks of the river – about 20 feet wide. Then gather some carpet circles or poly spot to use as marshmallows. Gather all the players on one side of the river. Imaginary situation: This is a giant river of hot chocolate. You must get your whole team across the river. You can’t swim because it is way too hot. You can’t walk because it is way too deep. The only way to get across is to use these marshmallows (give them one per player plus a couple of extra). The current of the river is so strong that it will sweep the marshmallows downstream immediately if someone is not constantly holding them down. They must be held down, but they can’t be moved once they are

placed. Watch closely and take away any marshmallows that aren't being held down. On debrief ask about the communication you observed. For example the communication that had to happen before someone stepped onto or off of a marshmallow.

Islands

Use carpet circles, poly spots or even rags as islands in a shark infested ocean. Imaginary situation: We have been shipwrecked in tropical waters. The water is nice and warm. Rescue vessels have been called. While we wait to be rescued, players can swim, boat, jet ski or snorkel in the water. I as the leader will watch out for sharks. If I see a shark you will know it. We love to play the theme music to Jaws to signify a shark sighting, but can also just yell "SHARK!" When this happens, the object is for everyone to be touching an island with no part of his or her body in the water. I let them know it is safe to swim again, but as they start swimming I tell them that global warming is happening! The icecaps are melting and the ocean is rising – and SOME of the islands are now under water. Continue. Each round take away an island. Repeat "SHARK!" The object is for everyone to get onto the platform and off the water while they count to 15

or sing a silly song. This is a variation of Diminishing All Aboard.

Jump the Rope

Get the team on one side of rope. You and another adult slowly swing the rope a little. The challenge is for the whole team to get to the other side of the rope, one at a time, without touching the rope.

Lap Sit

Can be done with any size team. Circle Up. Team steps in to form a tighter and tighter circle until they finally have to all turn to the right to keep tightening the circle. When every player is facing the back of the player in front of them and the circle is really tight, the challenge is for the whole team to sit down – the whole team sitting on the player’s lap behind them.

Magic Carpet

You’ll need a tarp to represent the magic carpet. Lay the magic carpet out on the ground. All players stand on the magic carpet. At this step we like to have the team think about any barriers or challenges that exist that keep them from meeting their goals or mission. They write these challenges

on masking tape and tape them to the magic carpet. Then we talk about how we can flip over our problems and challenges and look at them as goals. For example a challenge of finding time for curriculum planning after camp begins can be flipped over as a goal of doing advance planning before camp begins. On “Go.” the challenge is for them to flip the tarp over so that the side facing the ground becomes the side on which they stand. Since they are flying in the air, no one may step off of the tarp.

Machine

Get in teams of 6-8. The challenge is for the teams to make themselves into a machine with as many moving parts as possible – think levers, gears, conveyor belts, ejector seats, complete with all the sound effects. Give them time to plan, then present their machine. Other teams try to guess what each machine is.

Minefield

First create a minefield. Use ropes to define the minefield space then scatter items (bean bags, rubber chickens, poly spots, etc.) around the area to represent land mines. Players partner up. Imaginary situation: Pretty obvious here. One partner has been blinded (blindfold or close eyes)

by an exploding mine. The other partner is safely out of the mine field but can see the mines. The safe player must guide the blinded player through the minefield with verbal commands. You can change the name of this if you are sensitive to the war imagery – make it a pasture of cow pies if you like! On debrief talk about what communication strategies were successful and what players did that made their partners feel safe.

Radioactive Ring

This is a variation of Helium Stick. Your team must slowly and carefully lower a glass ring filled with a radioactive gas (composed of the isotope Thisilkillium 189) into a vat of cooling fluid. Give one hula-hoop for every 6 or 8 players. Players need to keep their upper arms down, bent at the elbows so that the forearms are at a 90-degree angle at the elbow - forefingers extending out. Play begins with the hoop resting flat on their forefingers. No one's fingers may lose contact with the hoop - EVER. Should that happen, the team must start anew. We like to make it REALLY clear that their mission is to LOWER the hoop DOWN into the cooling liquid. We even have them team repeat their mission. On "Go" the team must lower the hoop to the floor. Because of the pressure of everyone maintaining contact with the hoop – it typically begins to rise

and players laugh and try to understand the problem. On debrief you can talk about everyday situations where we try to place blame for the problem and fail to focus on our own part in the solution.

Swap Knots

This is a fun variation of the old classic Human Knot. Group up in teams of 8, 10, or 12. Give a bandanna or three-foot piece of rope (We like Multipurpose Poly Cord, 5/32 inch, 50lb load) to $\frac{1}{2}$ the group (give a team of 12 six ropes, team of 10 five ropes and a team of 8 four ropes). Lay the ropes out in an asterisk-like shape. Players grab one end of the rope. Allow each group 6 to 8 minutes to tangle the ropes as much as possible. Two rules: players may not let go of the ropes, and may not tighten the knot by pulling on it. After completing their knot, they place the tangled ropes on the floor so the ends of the ropes can be visible. Each team moves to another team's knot, and players grab the end of one of the ropes and they try to untangle the ropes until they are standing in pairs back in the asterisk shape. On debrief, you can ask, How are we connected to each other? How can we solve problems and remain connected to each other? Do we have to solve problems that others create at work?

Trust Walk

Pair Up. One is blindfolded. The challenge is to safely take the blindfolded player on a trip. The trip can be a random trip, an obstacle course, a trip to fetch an object, or a trip through obstacles (bean bags) on the floor.

Work of Art

In this fun improv game, players rotate through roles as artist, clay, and model. Divide players into teams of three. Give each team a blindfold. Players decide who will play the artist, the clay, and the model. The clay wears the blindfold and acts like a moldable lump of clay. The model poses in any creative pose he or she can come up with. The artist observes the model, and attempts to form the clay into the identical pose as the model. All players remain silent throughout the game. When the artists feel confident that their works are exact copies of the model, they remove the mask from the clay, unveiling their works of the art for all to admire. Next, the players switch roles, and repeat at least two times so that everyone has a chance to play each role. On debrief discuss when players were most and least comfortable. Ask which role they preferred and why. Also ask what challenges were difficult for them personally or as a team, and where those challenges come up in real life.

Resources

Some of these games we played as children, others we learned from colleagues, others we learned in workshops, and still others we learned from teambuilding experts we have hired to teach us games. Many versions of the games gathered here exist in many different books and many different online resources. It is just about impossible to discover the original creators of these games. They have been passed from generation to generation in the spirit of teambuilding. We pass our favorites to you in the same spirit. Enjoy!

Here are some of our favorite resources...

- *Silver Bullets*, and *Cows Tails and Cobras* by Karl Rohnke;
- *Outrageous Outdoor Games* and *Incredible Indoor Games* by Bob Greyson.
- *Teamwork and Teamplay* and the *Book of Raccoon Circles* by Dr. Jim Cain as well as all of his collaborative books like
 - *A Teachable Moment* with Michelle Cummings and Jennifer Stanchfield;
 - *Teambuilding Puzzles* with Mike Anderson, Chris Cavert and Tom Heck; and

- *Essential Staff Training Activities* with Clare-Marie Hannon and Dave Knobbe.

Others:

- *Essentials of Teambuilding*, by Midura and Glover;
- *Tips & Tools: The Art of Experiential Group Facilitation* by Jennifer Stanchfield;
- *Raptor & Other Team Building Activities* by Sam Sikes;
- *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games* by Tamblyn and Weiss;
- *The Big Book of Leadership Games* by Vasudha Deming, and
- *The Big Book of Icebreakers* by Edie West.