

A FEW GETTING-TO-KNOW-YOU ACTIVITIES

Let's jump right into our first circle activity.

My name is _____, and if I were an animal I'd be a _____ because....

I demonstrate for my youth: "My name is Kathy and if I were an animal, I'd be a turtle," I say, "because I'm always rushing around. Sometimes I wish I could slow down."

Then I give the 4-H youth a little time to think about what animals they might like to be -- and why. I encourage them to be creative, to be different and unique. The first 4-Her to one side of me in the circle starts out. After the first 4-Her finishes, I say, paraphrasing, "My name is Kathy and if I were an animal, I'd be a turtle because I'd like to be able to slow down. This is Emily, and if she were an animal, she'd be a hyena because she likes to laugh a lot." Then it's on to the next child. After each child speaks, I try to repeat all the other kids' name-and-animal combinations in order. That's always good for a laugh or two -- shows the kids right from the start that the teacher isn't perfect!

Let's play detective.

I hand out a Clue Sheet to each 4-Her. We go over the statements on the sheet, and then I ask the 4-Hers to find a quiet spot where they can fill in the blanks in statements such as

- "My favorite hobby is _____."
- "When I grow up, I want to have a job as a _____."
- "The most fun thing I did all summer was _____."

I preface this activity by telling the 4-Hers that I *don't* want them to put their names on their papers. As the 4-H finish filling out their Clue Sheets, each picks up the sheet that has been turned in complete and sits back down. Then introduce the activity. Hand an anonymous Clue Sheet to each 4-Her. If a 4-Her ends up with his or her own sheet, we make some switches.

"I want to see whether you're good detectives," I tell the 4-hers. Then I invite them to move around, asking questions of their classmates, narrowing down the list of "suspects" until they find the one person who matches all the clues they hold.

True or False?

This activity is always fun, and we all learn something interesting about one another! I start. I write four facts about myself on the board. Three of the facts are true, and one is false. 4-Hers take little true-false test. Then survey the 4-Hers to learn the results. We go back over each question to see what they thought about each statement. That gives you, the leader, a chance to tell a little about you. Then, on a sheet of paper, 4-Hers write three interesting facts about themselves that are true and one that is false. Throughout the meeting, ask a few 4-Hers to try to stump the rest of us.

BINGO-Scavenger Hunt!

To get communication going between 4-hers who aren't necessarily friends, start the year off with a game of BINGO. Make up BINGO cards for the 4-Hers. Each square on the card includes a brief description. Examples: Visited Florida this summer, went to teen-get-away, Has a big brother and little sister, Was born in another country, Learned how to skateboard this summer, Raises animals for their project, Likes to go bowling, makes rockets, Has a brother or sister in the same school, Father's name is Jim, Read more than one book this summer, Speaks two languages, Has two pets. 4-Hers walk around the room and get the signature of someone who fits the specific description in each box. The goal is to be the first to one to fill the BINGO card with signatures.

To make it harder, have 4-Hers fill every square with a different member's signature and set a time limit. When a 4-Her has a BINGO (one name signed per square) give the person a small prize.

Here are several ideas for icebreaker activities suitable for a wide range of youth.

- Start with a ball of yarn. Say your name and an interesting fact about yourself. Then, holding the end, toss the ball to a youth. The youth will say his/her name and an interesting fact, then, holding on to part of the yarn, toss the ball to another student. By the time everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn.
- Split the youth into pairs. Each pair will have 30 seconds to find 5 things they have in common. At the end of the 30 seconds, put two pairs together and give the foursome a minute to find something all 4 youth have in common. Finally, each group can present the list of things they have in common.
- Pass around a bag of M&M's. Tell the youth to take as many as they want. Once all the youth have M&M's, tell them that for each M&M they took they have to say one thing about themselves. For instance, if a student took 10 M&M's, they would have to say 10 things about themselves.
- Have the youth line up in a particular order. For instance, tell them to line-up by birth date. You can make this more difficult by not allowing them to talk during this activity. For older youth, the line up could be based upon a 1-5 scale. For instance, lines up accordingly from strongly agree to strongly disagree with a particular topic. This can also stimulate interesting conversation.

TUSKER or Add-On-Tag

One IT pair of hand-in-hand runners to catch a fleeing pair (or individual) and then if caught become part of the IT pair.

Only the two people at the ends of the catching line are allowed to tag a fleeing pair or individual.

If the line breaks at any point — a catch is disallowed.

If the fleeing pair or individual breaks grip or runs out of bounds they are automatically caught.

*Restrict the playing area. Make the IT group into two lines if one gets too big. Extend the boundaries as they are playing to make the game more interesting. (Use noodles and 4 cones)

BRAAAAAAAK—WHFFFFFF *

Everyone gets a balloon (purchase different colors, larger than water balloons). Make a round boundary for everyone to start off in. Have everyone blow up their balloons — just short of popping (have spares available). Don't tie off the balloon's neck, just hold on and get together with others who have the same color balloon as yours.

One player, representing the one team's color (you can have as many teams as you have colors) and standing within the boundary area, lets go of his/her balloon, allowing it to jet willy-nilly about. As the limp projectile comes to rest, another team member of the same color advances to that point and releases their balloon. This continues until everyone has gone. The winner is the team that gets the furthest from the boundary.

CIRCLE THE CIRCLE

Ask the group (15-30) to form a hand-in-hand circle. Place two hula hoops together between two people (rest on their grasped hands). See how quickly the participants in the circle can cause the hoops to travel around the circle (over the people) in the opposite directions, through each other (i.e., hoop through hoop) and back to the originating point.

It's interesting to see what the group's response is when you ask, "Who won?" after both hoops have circled the circle. It takes some thought to realize that the entire group is working as a team. NO LOSERS. NO WINNERS.

Quail Shooter's Delight

If you know you are going to fail, it makes trying less of a trauma. The object of this throw and catch game is to grab as many of the thrown objects as possible and hold onto them. The not-so-obvious rationale is to provide a low-key vehicle for unselfconscious participation.

Ask 2 or 3 people to stand back-to-back in the center of a people circle that measures about 30' in diameter. The number of people in the middle and the circle size will vary according to the numbers playing.

Using easily throw able soft balls, ask each person in the circle on the count of 3 of loft the balls toward the people or person in the middle. The results are predictably bad, but everyone expects it. The people who haven't tried all think they can do better.

TP SHUFFLE

Ask a group of about 20 people to halve themselves, and with their newly formed group to stand on opposite ends of the TP or beam so that the two groups are facing one another in single file. Establishing this face-to-face queue is not the problem. The essential difficulty lies in having the 2 groups exchange ends of the pole without touching the ground. Time the entire procedure and assign a 15 second time penalty for every touch of the ground. After a complete attempt, encourage the group to talk things over and give it another try.

As with all these timed initiative problems, it is important to attempt the problem one than once. (Teamwork and leadership are used for the activity)

SHIP WRECK

A peripatetic "all aboard" problem. The object of Ship Wreck is to gain the most points during the activity through group cooperation and fast action!

Divide participants into 2 groups with 8-10 per group. Give each group a "ship" and instruct all members to hold onto the ship as they run the length of the playing field. Groups are to run with their "ship" until you yell SHARK. Then all the members jump aboard (or inside the hula hoop) "ship". The first group with all feet of the ground gains a point. Repeat this several times. The 1st group to cross the finish line gains 3 pts.

Debrief with suggestions on how to improve next time. Repeat if the group had fun the 1st time.

FLIP-ME-THE-BIRD TAG

Just like any other tag game. Depending on the size of your group assign 1-2 people to be IT. Set up boundaries with your orange cones. You'll need one rubber chicken. Give that rubber chicken to some one that isn't it. Start the game. If you person that's IT is coming toward some one without the bird, they simply say, "flip me the bird" in order to be safe from being tagged it. Very simple and fun game. You can also use a rubber pig and call it "pass me the pork".

If doing this game with different age groups you can have the people shuffle and shake their butts instead of running.

TRUST CIRCLE

Standing in a circle, all members of the group hold on to the web loop with both hands. By moving the feet slightly to the center of the circle and leaning back, a circle of trust (trust in the webbing, self-trust, trust-in-others) is formed. This is the basic connection to the others in the group. Balance and stillness are the goals of the basic trust circle. Instructions can to be close eyes, come to center (with self), breathe deeply, and sense the connection, the support, and the security of the circle.

The facilitator can focus the group's attention on comfort by pointed out the value of not twisting the webbing. The group can also be told that they can re-arrange people to attain the best balance. If it is observed that the group, or some members of the group are not in a full trust lean, instruction to move feet a few more inches inward are appropriate

TRUST CIRCLE—CONTINUED

When the group achieves balance and stillness, trust is apparent to everyone. Typically, this circle of trust brings the group to a state of connectedness and involvement that would usually not occur for some time in a group's development.

When the group is comfortable with the trust lean, have the participants open their eyes, look at others in the circle, share names, memories of favorites places or the animal they would like to be. There can, of course be sharing of feelings and thoughts about trust, interdependency, cooperation, safety and or belongingness.

Once the group has learned to connect in this basic circle of trust it can be re-established when appropriate throughout the challenge sequence.

CIRCLE OF COOPERATION

When the group can hold balance, instructions are for them to slowly, cooperative, rhythmically, lower themselves to a sitting position—keeping the plane of the circle parallel to the ground. Then, slowly, cooperative, pull back up to a standing position. Let the group practice the down and up moves until they are comfortable with them. (Again they can move people around if they want to)

Next, instruct the group to make a 3 time sequential flow of movements—down, up, down, up, down, up. It may be appropriate to tell the group, when standing, that they can relax the pressure of the circle and shake out hands and arms.

Finally, the group is to create an appropriate sound for the down and up movements. When they have agreed on sound effects, they can enjoy their circle of cooperation in a 3-time sequence — with sound effects.

WILLOWS AND WAVES

Starting from the standing balance, the group can shift the essential responsibility for supporting the group about the circle. This involves “giving up” or “surrendering” control sometimes, and “taking on” the responsibility for helping hold the group in balance at other times. The “wave” of support can be passed about the circle, 1st one direction and then the other, demonstrating the flowing balance that can be achieved.

In the early going, the circle should not move from side to side more than a few inches, or people will be off balanced. However, as the group becomes more proficient at shifting the responsibility from person to person, they may be able to have the web loop move 10-12 inches without anybody losing balance.

Debriefing of this exercise can focus on the reality of one’s involvement in a group -- sometimes being dependent and “leaning on” others for support and sometimes standing strong and being available for others to “lean on”.

SHAKE-UP

Have the group start in the basic trust circle, and give instructions that each person is to shake and move the web loop and try to off-balance others in the group, without moving their own feet. Those with more upper body strength or greater range of movement will be more successful. Others will consciously or unconsciously begin to cooperate with neighbors and succeed in off-balancing those across the circle. This exercise gets people in touch with their competitiveness and aggressive tendencies, but the activity is designed to create conflict between that tendency and the supportive, care taking tendency. After the group has had some time with the instruction to try and off-balance others, introduce a 2nd instruction. While working to off-balance others, everyone is to take responsibility for helping the person to their right stay in balance. Participants will respond differently. Some will tend to put more energy on the goal of off-balancing other, while others will put greater effort into the goal of helping their neighbor stay in

balance. When most of the people emphasize the care taking goal, the whole group will shake and tug the web loop—but no one will be off-balanced.

Pairs Tag

Target Group: If you can move you can play - it would also be good to be able to see where you're going!

Group Size: Any Number!

Time Range: 90 seconds per round.

Space Needs: More bodies, more area.

Props: None - or add a Noodle for each pair for color and fun

Procedure: For all you experienced "Pairs Taggers" out there, don't give up on this one. I found a few fun twists you might enjoy. Here's the basic game: Creatively pair up players. Establish boundaries around the players using cones or shirts or something soft. Make the area large enough for players to move around in, but not so large that they get tired out too fast - you'll see. Explain to all the players that this is a tag game and the only person they can tag in this game is their partner. All players must stay within the boundary area during the game. If a player goes out of bounds (and gets caught) this person becomes "it" in the duo. Speed for this game should be no faster than a fast-walk. There should be no running. We want to avoid head butts!! Let's run this down (no pun intended). Have pairs decide who will be "it" first. Have all the "its" close their eyes. Give the un-its a chance to get away - **STAY IN THE BOUNDARIES!** On "go" let the "its" find their partner for the tag. Once tagged, this new "it" must turn around one complete 360 degree turn before going after their partner for the tag back. Continue the tag, tag-back for about 90 seconds. This can be a very aerobic game - keep an eye on the heavy breathers.

Variation Ideas: Add one of those foam Noodle toys as a tagging device. After a Noodle tag below the knees, set the Noodle down - don't throw it. Tagged person does a spin before picking up the Noodle and going off for the tag-back. Here's a fun one I just tried (thanks to the creative mind who thought of this one). After each round shrink the boundaries down. The last round players should be reaching around through other players to tag their partner - this is great fun to watch if the players are using Noodles. Note on this one: I like to change partners each round to give players a chance to be with other friends or make new ones. Also, I've found about 5 rounds to be the maximum tolerance level on this one!

Observations/Questions: Were you able to follow the rules for this game? Who remembers the rules? What might be a reason for not following the rules? What made

the activity difficult? Are there similar situations in other parts of your life? What do you do about it?

Source: "Cowstails & Cobras" Karl Rohnke, "50 Ways to Use Your Noodle" Cavert & Sikes

Everyone's It

Setup & Materials: All you need is an area open area where you can see all the children who are playing.

Gameplay: Just like any good game of tag, someone is it. In this game though it's everyone. If you are tagged then you are out. Play continues until there is one person left. If two players tag each other at the same time then they are both out.

Cautions: its tricky getting kids to tag hard enough to have others feel it but not so hard as to hurt others but do your best.

Amoeba Tag

Two people are it. They hold hands and chase people; the person they catch joins the chain by linking hands. When another person is caught they can stay together or split 2 and 2 they must split even numbers and can link together at will. This game is played till' nobody is left.

Toilet or Turtle Tag

Like normal tag, except that if you squat down like a toilet then it is a base, and you are safe from becoming "it". You can also play turtle tag. It is like normal tag, except when you get on your back like a stuck turtle you are safe.

Sardines

This game reverses the rules of hide and seeks--one-person hides and the rest look for him.

How to play:

Step 1: Players count to one hundred while one child hides. The search party then breaks up to looking.

Step 2: As each player finds "It," they squeeze into the hiding place until the spot is jammed with kids.

Step 3: When the last person finds the hiding place, that kid gets to start a new game by hiding first.

Clothes Pin Tag

Required: Clothes pins and rope

Players: Large groups

Mark off a play area of at least 40ft by 40ft by putting rope on the ground. All players are to receive 5 clothes pins, pinned the back of their shirts. Have them all spread out around the edge of the rope before starting. The object is to try to capture clothes pins from someone else's back without losing yours. If you capture a clothes pin you are to go down on one knee while pinning it on your back. While you are on one knee, no one can take a clothes pin from you. If you go out of bounds you lose a clothes pin. There is no pushing and you can only touch clothes pins, no touching or pulling clothes or the body. Any violators will lose one clothes pin to victim. The person with the most clothes pins in the allowed time you choose wins. You can play teams and the team with the most is the winner also

Heads or Tails

Required: Quarter and play area

Players: Small to large groups

Have the players divide into two teams. Label one team HEADS and the other TAILS. Lay out two centerlines that are parallel to each other and three feet apart. Then set up two boundary lines about 20 feet from the center lines for each team to cross for their safe zone. Use hoses or rope if outdoors and tape if indoors. To start, make teams stand with their backs toward each other at the centerlines. Toss the coin into the air. Once the coin has landed on the ground call out if it's heads or tails. If it was tails, the TAILS team must run to their safe zone. The HEADS team will turn around and try to tag the TAILS team before they reach their safe zone. After each toss and chase, players are to return to the centerline, except tagged players-they are out of the game. You play until one team has captured everyone on the opposite team and that team is the winner. Heads or Tails is a good game for Physical Educators, Youth Groups, picnic game or party game.

Hula-Hoop Tag

Required: Gym floor and Hula-Hoops

Players: Medium to large groups

Pick 2-4 players to roll Hula-Hoops that will be positioned across both sides of the play area or gym floor. Have the rest of the players line up across the width of the gym floor. Players will run from one end of the gym floor to the other trying not to touch or be tagged by the rolling Hula-Hoops from the players on the side of the play area. As players are tagged they will join the rollers on the sides with additional Hula-Hoops to tag existing runners. Great game idea for PE teachers and kids will beg to do this again.

Zombie Tag

This game involves the ultimate "It"--a hideous, groaning zombie whose goal is to clutch...er, tag...his victims.

What you need:

1. gross rubber mask
2. rubber hand
3. blindfold

How to play:

Step 1: Outside, rope off a circular area, or lay down some sweatshirts in a circle, and be prepared to yell "out-of-bounds!" to your blindfolded zombie. Make sure it's a trip-proof playing area. Inside, you can play in a large rec room.

Step 2: This game follows the classic rules of Marco Polo. "It" wears the rubber mask (with blindfold) and hands. Everyone has to stay within the circle while he wanders around with his arms stretched out in front, zombie style (this also keeps him from crashing). When "It" groans, all the players must groan back and extend their arms. This is how the zombie zeroes in on his victims. When a player gets tagged, she becomes the next "It" and gets to wear the mask.

Tips:

This game is thrilling but depending upon the zombie mask it can be frightening so we wouldn't play it with very little ones

Slow Motion Tag

Target Group: 10 and older.

Group Size: 10 or more players.

Time Range: Each game lasts only a couple of minutes.

Space Needs: A big enough area to accommodate the size of your group.

Props: You would only need some things to indicate the boundary area - stuff at the corners.

Procedure: Ask each player in the group to find their own personal space within the boundary area. Make sure there is enough room so no one is able to take one step towards someone and tag them. Adjust the boundaries out a bit if needed. Explain the guidelines and then let players adjust themselves before you start. You, as the leader, will be calling out, "Step". At this time, each player can move one of their feet in any direction they want. The objective here is to tag other players anywhere below the cranium. If a player is tagged, s/he will sit down right where they are – they become "ankle biters". So, back to the game. Every time you, the leader, says, "Step" each player can take ONE step. If anyone moves both feet during a step, they sit down to become ankle biters. The ankle biters, sitting on their bottoms at all times, can tag the players still standing if they get close enough. However, ankle biters can only tag below the knee. Play down to the last two players and call them co-slow-mo champs for the moment. Have everyone stand up and play again. It's fun to watch the different strategies emerge after a few rounds of play.

Team Tag

Target Group: 12 and older

Group Size: 12 to 24 players

Time Range: 15 to 25 minutes

Space Needs: Large open area

Props: One small soft tossable object and four markers for the corner of the boundary area.

Procedure: (It might be helpful to go back to November 2000 and review Everybody's It without the High 10 part.) Break your group into small teams of 4 players each. Give each team a different tossable object. This is their "get-back-inner" for the game. When the game begins everyone starts to play "Everybody's It" - except you don't tag anyone

on your own team. Tags are made below the neck in a safe manner. When tagged, the player squats down. To get back in the game, the squatter must receive the "get-back-inner" (GBI) from another teammate - the player who possesses the GBI must throw it to the squatting player, not simply tag the player with it. If a player has the GBI and is tagged, she squats down and then finds someone on her team to throw the GBI to. She must have it thrown back to her to get back in (no throwing it to herself). At no time during play can another team touch/disrupt the GBI of another team. The objective: Have the most players standing when time is up. (2-minute rounds work well). There is a way to beat the odds by staying close together and just handing the GBI around - but the game isn't as much fun. Brings up the discussion of the "FUN FACTOR" - problem solving your way right out of a good time.

Add-On-Tag - Everyone chooses a partner and one duo is declared IT. That pair catches another pair and they join hands to become a group of four. That group catches another and so on. Only the two people at the ends of the line are allowed to tag a fleeing pair (they don't have to touch both, just one person from a team). If the line breaks at any point, IT has to stop and re-connect, and anyone caught while the line was broken is free. This continues until only one fleeing pair is left.

To prevent injury, do not allow pairs to run through or under the catching line. Restrict the playing area so that the game is active, but not so small that the catching line becomes unbeatable.

Catch the Dragon's Tail – You need a good size area for this event, clear of sudden pits and immovable oaks. About 8 – 10 people line up, one behind the other. Everyone puts their arms around the waist of the person in front of them, forming the dragon. (You cannot be ticklish around dragons!) The last person in line tucks a bandanna in the back of her belt/pants. To work up steam, the dragon might let out a few roars. At the GO signal, the dragon starts chasing its own tail, with the object being to snatch the bandanna. The tricky part of this epic struggle is that the head and the tail are competing, but the middle is not sure where to go. When the head finally catches the tail, who is the defeated and who is the victor? EVERYONE!! The head puts the bandanna in her back pocket, and becomes the new tail!

Dizzy Izzies

Equipment: None

Time: 5-10 min

Like normal tag, but when you get tagged, you have to spin around 3 times quickly. Prevents tag-backs and offers free vertigo buzz.

Flip Me the Bird

Equipment: Rubber chicken or any soft object

Time: 5-10 minutes

Just like normal tag, except the person with the bird is immune. The bird cannot be thrown to the same person twice in succession. To vary, try multiple birds. But one person can't have both birds at one time.

Hospital Tag

Equipment: None

Time: 10-15 min

Everyone is it. If you get tagged one time, cover up one arm. Twice, cover both. Three times, hop on one foot. And forth, you're out and must sit down. You can still tag after three tags, but not if you are sitting.

Triangle Tag

Equipment: None

Gather in groups of 4. Choose one person in every group to be it for that group. The other three individuals link arms to form a triangle. The its from each group gather away from the triangles. The triangles choose one person to be the person being chased. When the it returns to the group, the triangle spins protect the person being chased. The triangle may not detach. If the person is tagged, then they are now it and a new person is picked to be the chased.

People to People

Equipment: None

Time 10-15 minutes

Group gets into pairs. You call out head to toe, knee to head, elbow to ear, etc. After you call out a body part to a body part the pairs must do it. After 3 calls yell "people to people" and everyone has to switch partners. This is your chance to grab a partner. The odd person out is the new caller.