

INTRODUCTIONS, WARM-UPS, ENERGIZERS, AND GAMES

Additions (and recommended deletions) to this collection are welcome!

Introductions, followed by warm-up activities are interactive opportunities at the beginning of sessions that assist people to get to know each other, relax, and connect to being at the session. They break the “cold” that sometimes occurs when people are unfamiliar with each other, and they bring a warmth to the beginning of an event. Some activities will assist people to get to know each other through conversation, and others through physical activities. Often activities can be set up that relate to the subject matter of the session, which moves people forward into the content as well.

If the energy level of a session is dropping, shifting into an activity can also pick the level up.

Simple Introductions

When people introduce themselves, just use first names (if appropriate) and have them answer questions in relation to the purpose of the session. These could include such ones as these examples: “What brought you to this workshop?”, “What are you most looking forward to in this session?”, “What is the biggest thrill/pain in your life in the last year?”, “If you could be any animal, what would it be and why?”, or any other unusual question.

Introduction Warm-ups

1. **Friendship-Building Musical Chairs:** Put chairs in a circle facing out. Leave an aisle for walking single file in a circle around these chairs. Put another row of chairs facing the inner circle. The number of chairs in each circle need to be the same. If the gender balance is even, then all the males in the group sit on the inner circle, and all the females sit in the outer circle. If not, then it should be totally mixed gender for both circles. Play music and those from the outer circle walk around in the aisle between the circles until the music stops. When it stops, they sit in chairs facing the others. They have approx. 2 minutes to discover three things about each other that they did not know previously. After three minutes, start the music again and those on the inner ring walk until it stops. Repeat the discovery process until the music starts again. Note: While this can be an excellent activity for the participants to get to know one another, the facilitators don't hear what is said, so you won't learn about people through this activity.
2. **Name and Number:** As people walk into the workshop, put their name on one side of an index card, and a number on the other side and tape it to the front of their shirt. As everyone walks around with their name showing, they have to try to introduce themselves to as many people as they can. After a bit of mingling, tell everyone to turn over his or her card, so that the number is showing rather than the name. Now give everyone a piece of paper with numbers and blanks to match the number of people present, and see who can fill in the most names next to the corresponding numbers.
3. **Spiritual Potluck:** Ask each person to bring something spiritually-related (an object, book, prayer, poem, anything...) with them to share with the group that will tell the group something about them.

Other Warm-ups and Energizers

1. **Ball Courtesy:** Get in a circle with three different colors of lightweight plastic balls. Each ball is identified as being associated with a particular courtesy phrase. For example, the blue ball could be “Thank You” and the red ball could be “please.” Toss all balls at the same time to each other. As you

catch the ball, say the associated phrase. Once you have caught all colors twice and answered correctly, drop out of the circle. Limit the game to just a few minutes.

2. **Observation Skill Building:** In dyads (group of two people), stand closer to each other than you are comfortable with but not touching for approximately two minutes. Aloud and in rapid succession, state what you are observing. For example, “You have blue eyes,” “You have black hair” and so on.
3. **Form a Line:** Tell the participants: “I want you to form a line from this point to this point (*show the points*), you have (10 or 35) seconds, on my mark, one, two, three, (spoken very, very fast) place yourselves in alphabetical order of first names, GO!” It takes a few seconds for people to react to the new input, then they panic a bit, then they run and try to make it on time, asking each other’s names frantically and laughing a good deal about it.
4. **Detective:** Prepare in advance a sheet with interwoven circles titled with categories of people, silly-funny ones like: has a cat, has a dog, likes ice-cream, likes movies; or more significant categories like: is engaged, is investigating someone’s character, married, single... Just choose two, three or four categories. The circles should look like a Venn’s diagram (two interlocking circles). Distribute a sheet to each participant and give them a minute or two to fill these circles with other participants’ names. Keep in mind that some may be included in two or three categories and should therefore be put in common areas where the circles overlap.
5. **The Couch Game:** Make a list of the first names of all the participants. Cut them out, fold them in half and put them in a container. Half the people take off their shoes. Place the chairs in a circle by pairs, with one group of four chairs on one side of the circle. On each pair of chairs sit a couple of shoed/unshoed people. Distribute the papers of first names to each participant, asking them not to tell anyone what name they got and to take good care of the papers. There has to be one couple of chairs that has only one person sitting, leaving the other chair empty. That person will call a name other than her own or the one on her paper. The person who has the paper with that name has to stand and sit beside the first one and they switch papers. The new person who is alone gets to call another name. People will try to remember where the paper names are and make four people of one team (shoed or unshoed) sit on the “couch”, the group of four chairs.

Content-Related Warm-ups

1. **Heart Activity:** Please write on a cut-out heart a positive memory from your relationship or marriage that you are comfortable sharing with the group. **Introductions, Please Share:** Name, Where Live, Length of Time in Relationship or Married, Number of Children, Positive Memory from Relationship/Marriage that you wrote on the heart; **Happiness Point:** Create and record positive marital memories. Focus consciously on positive memories and bring appropriate behavior and practices from the past into the present. **Warning Sign:** You have only bad memories in your relationship and no good ones. (Researcher Dr. John Gottman)
2. **Fortress Bricks (up to 100 people):**
 - a) Announce that the activity will be done in dyads (group of two people) with the person sitting next to them, and ask everyone to quickly stand up and move if necessary so they are sitting next to someone they don’t already know.
 - b) Hand each person a half sheet of cardstock and a marker. Tell them this is a brick of the “fortress” of marriage and have them write their full names on the brick and read the following quotations about marriage:

“The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, great would be the difficulty! ... [T]he foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 391-2)

“And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation, and enjoined it upon us in that which was sent down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book. He saith, great is His glory: ‘Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.’” (Bahá’u’lláh: *Bahá’í Prayers* (US 2002), p. 118)

They are then to discuss and write on the brick what qualities of a marriage might indicate that it is spiritual and which ones are physical.

- c) When everyone has competed this, begin a round of introductions. Each person should stand, state their name, and share one quality/qualities they wrote on their brick without duplicating ones already shared. At the end of introductions, provide circles of rolled up masking tape to tape the bricks up as a “wall” of the fortress.

3. **Object & Relationships (up to 20 people):**

- a) Gather and place on a tray or table a number of household objects. There should be more than the number of attendees. These might include such things as a spoon, stapler, tape, balloon, magnet, string, glue, candle, dried flower, knife, candy, rock, cup, and so on. You can alternatively use graphics on small pieces of paper.
- b) Ask each person to take an object that reminds him/her of something to do with relationships or marriage.
- c) Voluntarily or going around a circle, ask each person to say their name and then share how the object reminds them of relationships or marriage.

4. **Web of Relationships (up to 10 people):**

- a) Have one ball of yarn per group.
- b) Stand in a circle with one person holding the ball of yarn.
- c) The first person should hold onto the end of the yarn and throw the ball to someone else in the group. When they throw it, they should say their name and some quality of a happy, long-lasting marriage (ex. good communication, etc.)
- d) The person who catches the ball, should hold onto the yarn so that it runs between the person who threw to them and themselves. Still holding on to that part of the yarn, they should then throw the ball to another person, saying his/her name and a marriage quality. This should continue until each person has received the ball. The building of the web can then continue with each person simply saying a quality and not his/her name each time. [Note: This activity can have endless variations by changing what is being said as the yarn is tossed. Some groups like to have more than one ball going at a time too, but this can be either energizing or confusing.]

Energizers/Games

Games and energizers have a number of helpful uses, in addition to their very practical function of offering distraction and relief from content presentation or sitting activities. Some of these uses include the following:

- Relax the group and help people behave more spontaneously. Engaging participants in meaningful, often fun activities can reduce tension and anxiety.
- Allow participants to become acquainted with one another in a more meaningful way; offering glimpses into character, attitudes, values, aspects of personality, concerns, and so on.
- Build a spirit of cooperation among the participants.
- Set a climate, tone, and pace for the program.
- Inject energy into the group.

Note: It is important to remember, however, that the primary goal of your sessions is learning and not entertainment. While it is important to infuse a spirit of happiness and joy in the sessions and at times have fun with the presentations and activities, any games and energizers need to be used in moderation, and where possible also move the participants forward with the goals of the session. It is best to use no more than two games in an 8-hour period.

1. **Being Peaceful:** In a world full of stress and anger, daily meditation can help people become more peaceful and quieter. They will be able to control feelings of anger and be more relaxed. However, it is often easy for people to become angry at someone or themselves. This game will help participants be peaceful even during a stressful situation.

On small pieces of paper, participants write down some of the things that makes people angry or sad. These might be: ruining their wife's favorite dress, losing a favorite book or game, or someone yells at them at work or at school. Collect the pieces of paper and put them in a bag. Ask everyone to sit in a circle. Each player takes a turn to pull a slip from the bag and reads it. When everyone is finished, all say together: **I am a peaceful being. I act in ways that are peaceful. I care about others and myself. I am a happy being.**

2. **My Personal Peace:** In a large group, discuss what is peace. It could be words, objects, feelings, or much more. Then have participants create what represents peace to them, using different mediums like clay, markers, paint, etc.
3. **The West Wind Blows:** All the participants are in a big circle with exactly enough chairs for 1 less than the number of people. The extra person is the caller. He/She is in the center of the circle and identifies a feature that at least one person seated in the circle has (blue eyes, blond hair, wearing blue jeans, etc.) He/She calls out "The west wind blows for people (with that feature)." Everyone with that feature must stand up and find a new seat. The caller also tries to get a seat. The 1 person left standing becomes the new caller.
4. **Who Am I?:** In advance, obtain a set of small cards equal to the number of participants. On each card, write one role that could be involved in a marriage ceremony, such as bride, groom, bridesmaid, mother of the bride, father of the bride, mother of the groom, father of the groom, clergyman, witness, reader, singer, musician, food provider). On arrival a greeter tapes it on a participant's back (without the person seeing their "identity"). The individual must ask other participants only yes or no questions to figure out "who they are."

Variation: Choose a different theme, such as famous people, heroes, virtues, myths about marriage, and so on and put a specific example on enough cards to match the number of participants. On arrival, a greeter attaches one of the cards on the back of each participant without him or her seeing what it says. They have to ask yes/no questions of others to find out what is written on the card they were given.

5. **Sweet Tidbits Game:** Pass around a bowl of chocolate dots/M&Ms/different colored candy to the group. Once everyone has their candy, they must tell something about themselves based on the colors they chose, using the following guidelines:

Red: What is one thing you hope to bring to your marriage?
Brown: What is one way you can help your marriage during troubled times?
Green: Name one quality you look for in a spouse.
Orange: What do you hope to learn during this workshop or what is the most valuable thing you learned during this workshop?
Yellow: What is one way of meeting someone new?
Blue: How is family (your mother, father, grandparents, siblings) important in your marriage?
6. **Jeopardy:** Create six categories, using the steps in the Marriage Can Be Forever workbook (Lay the Foundation: Before You Begin, Get Yourself Ready: Starting Your Search, Walk Carefully: Being a Couple, Explore Compatibility: Learning Together, Come to Commitment: You and Your Parents, and Move Forward: Wedding and Marriage.) A series of questions and answers drawn from the text get created. Under each category the answers are posted but hidden. The contestant chooses a category and the answer is read. If they are able to supply the correct question their team gets a point.
7. **Paper Bag Skits:** Divide the group into teams of three-to-six members. Hand each group a brown paper bag filled with a variety of household objects, such as a wooden spoon, a screw, a bar of soap, a computer disk, etc. The group must perform a skit using all of the props provided. Give each group a topic to base their skit on (such as creating a household budget, getting consent from your parents, or expressing your emotions). Groups will rehearse for about 10 minutes and then will perform for the other groups.
8. **Non-Verbal Birthdays:** Ask everyone to line up according to the month and day they were born without any talking.
9. **Name That Tune:** Small groups are formed (6-to-8 per group). Each group is asked to come up with the titles of songs or single lines from as many songs as they can think of that have to do with marriage and/or dating. In forming the list they are to be looking for songs that present the poorest possible basis for a lasting spiritual marriage (co-dependent, demeaning, needy, etc.) and the best possible basis for a lasting spiritual marriage (equality, justice, higher self). When the groups come back together, each small group will be asked to identify the songs they've selected and give reasons why they have the worst and best examples.
10. **Getting to Know the Neighbors:** Divide group in half. Place blindfolds on one-half of the group. Have other participants walk up to a blindfolded person. The blindfolded person can ask questions to figure out who the person is that's in front of them, but the person can only answer yes or no.
11. **Friendship Bingo:** Participants have sheet of paper with twelve squares on it. In each square, there is one unique thing that they might have in common with someone else in the room. Everyone has the same sheet. Examples of items that could be in the squares are: Lives in a particular state or country, favorite season is summer, been to a conference in the last 4 months, favorite color is blue, has a cat,

sings in a choir, or he/she has read a certain book. Each person talks to the other participants and collects a signature/initials in each box if the person matches the item. The first person to collect signatures in all the squares yells “BINGO” and wins the game (prize, group hug, first in line for a meal, group song).

Variation #2: Participants fill out a questionnaire in advance with unusual facts about themselves and then one square was “danced with Dustin Hoffman” and you fill in that square by going around and finding out who “danced with Dustin Hoffman.”

Variation #3: Participants are given a bingo card (see example below) and instructed to write in their bingo numbers (B=1-10, I=11-20, N=21-30, G=31-40, and O=41-50). A caller reads bingo numbers as if in the official game. If the participants have a matching number, they are asked to answer or describe the question/topic in that square. The first person with a row of five across or down is the winner.

An example:

B 1-10	I 11-20	N 21-30	G 31-40	O 41-50
4 Describe something someone could do to make you feel happy	12 Describe how you can serve others	21 What is something positive about yourself?	33 Describe a time you handled an issue well	43 Define “Fortress of Well-Being and Salvation”
8 Describe your best quality	19 Etc.	27 Etc.	34 Etc.	45 Etc.
9 Etc.	20 Etc.	FREE SPACE	37 Give an example when you sincerely praised your partner	47 What role do your partners have in your relationships?
2 Etc.	11 What is a quality of a spiritually-based marriage?	30 Describe what qualities you look for in a mate	39 Etc.	49 Etc.
6 Where can you meet new people?	15 Etc.	29 Etc.	40 Etc.	41 Etc.

- 12. Artwork Game (similar to the game Pictionary):** Write various MCBFW chapter titles, ideas, and/or topics on index cards. Divide the group into two or three teams. One person from each team will artistically represent the topic, with their team guessing the word or phrase. They may choose to draw it, sculpt it from modeling clay, Play Doh, or modeling beeswax, or act it out. The team which guesses the correct answer first gets a point. The team with the most points at the end of a given time (20 minutes, etc.) is the winner.
- 13. Recipe for a Great Marriage:** Divide the group into X smaller groups. Give each participant a blank piece of paper. Have Group 1 write down something that is important in a marriage. Have Group 2 write down any verb or action word (such as runs, laughs, smiles, etc). Have Group 3 write down an important quality of marriage. Have Group 4 write down an outcome of marriage. Pull them from a bag and make funny sentences.

Variation: Each participant writes down a word or phrase that is something important about marriage. Put them all in a bag and shake them up. Everyone draws one out. One person starts a sentence using the drawn word or phrase, stopping mid-sentence. The next person picks up the story, adding in his or her word to it. When he or she stops mid-sentence, the next person goes, and so on.

14. **Obstacle Course:** Have participants get into teams of two. Each team must perform a series of tasks (see examples below). The team who completes the tasks in the shortest time is the winner.

Sample Tasks (use any number of activities):

1. Team must feed “baby” (use a doll), change diaper, put on pajamas, and put baby into “crib”
2. Juice lemons/oranges/tomatoes/other juicy fruits or vegetables and fill glass up to a predetermined point
3. Team must untangle heavily knotted rope with only one hand from each person
4. Individual must blindfold their team member. Blindfolded person must identify a variety of ingredients (toothpaste, flour, spices, sugar, salt, pepper, mouthwash, cough syrup, lemons, etc.)
5. Label five chairs with the numbers one to five. Arrange chairs so they are not in numerical order. The team must arrange the chairs in numerical order, with rules such as only switching the chairs next to each other, and in only a certain number of moves.
6. Scatter several articles of clothing on the floor. The team must sort the clothes and put them into appropriate bags (by color, size, type, etc.) Using bags slightly smaller than piles will be more challenging for the team.
7. Team members wear pair of winter gloves and button down shirts. They must unbutton their shirt, trade shirts with their partner and button up the new shirt.

15. **Obstacle Course – Alternative:** Have participants get into teams of two. Each team must perform a series of tasks (see examples below). The team who completes the tasks in the shortest time is the winner.

Sample Tasks:

1. Pick three prayers and a reading for morning family devotional.
2. Wash and dry dishes.
3. Feed “baby” (use a doll), change diaper, put on pajamas, and put baby into “crib.”
4. Total the number of bills due in the month and the amount of income coming in.
5. Call and make a doctor’s appointment for the baby.
6. Organize plastic containers by size (kitchen cupboards).

Discuss: If you were faced with setting up a family in two to three years, what would you have to do to prepare yourself now.