Ice Breakers, Energizers & Other Activities

**Icebreakers**

**Human Bingo** (requires the subsequent bingo sheets photocopied and pens)
- Hand out “bingo” sheets with get-to-know-you questions.
- Explain that they need to move around the room and try to fill each on their bingo sheet with a different person’s name.
- When they have the whole sheet completed they should yell “bingo!”
- They should have each person sign at least once (if there are 16 or less people).
- Have winner read the names in each box and have the named person tell the group the answer.
- See below for a sample bingo sheet, or create your own original one.

**Candy Game** (requires a bag/jar of candy or other small treat or item youth can have)
- Pass around a candy jar to a group of youth. (Make sure there is at least enough candy for each person to take 3 or 4 pieces.)
- Have everyone take as much candy as they want but let them know that it must go around the whole circle with everyone getting some candy.
- If there is still candy in the jar then pass the jar around again.
- When the jar is empty tell them they must share one piece of information (nothing too personal) for every candy they have taken (e.g. favourites, family, music, experiences, likes/dislikes, etc).

**The Ball/Name Game** (requires 2 balls)
- Split the group into two equal groups, if you have more than 8 participants.
- Give each group one ball to start throwing to people within their group.
- When a person throws the ball they must call out the name of the person they are throwing it to.
- Gradually add more balls to the group.
- If people are feeling brave afterwards have them go around and say each person’s name.

**Two Truths and a Lie**
- Each person takes turns telling three things about themselves (nothing too personal). Two of the things they tell should be true, and one a lie. The others have to guess which one is the lie.
**Human Bingo**

Move about the room and try to fill a different person’s name in each spot. Have the person sign their name below the statement. When you have the whole sheet completed yell “bingo!”

Find someone who...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>is fluent in a language other than English (which one?)</th>
<th>has never been outside Canada (what place would they like to visit?)</th>
<th>is vegetarian (what type?)</th>
<th>is an aunt or uncle (how old is niece or nephew?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is scared of something (what is it?)</td>
<td>Doesn’t like being in/on the water</td>
<td>Is passionate about an issue or activity (what?)</td>
<td>Has a hidden talent/hobby others wouldn’t guess about them (what?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a driver’s license (how long have they been driving?)</td>
<td>Learned where babies came from their parents</td>
<td>Is in a relationship (how long?)</td>
<td>Plays a musical instrument or sings (for how long?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels pressure from the media to look or act a specific way</td>
<td>Has been supportive to someone in crisis (good for you!)</td>
<td>Plays a sport (what sport?)</td>
<td>Likes reading (what?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I Have a Secret” Snowball Activity

Goals:
- To help youth become more sensitive to how difficult it can be to tell personal or secret things about yourself.
- To help youth build confidence in their ability to be a great listener and peer helper.

Have Ready:
- One small sheet of paper and pen for each participant.

Instructions:
- Give everyone a piece of scrap paper and a pen.
- Ask them to think of a secret, something that they would not tell many people or any one at all about. It can be a secret thought, or can something they may have done. **Assure them that they will not be asked to write the secret down or tell the secret to anyone.** Give them 30 seconds to think of a secret. If people find it difficult, tell them to think of something that most people in the room do not know about them.
- Ask the group to think about what it would take from someone before they would be able to tell them about your secret. Now write one word, group of words, or a phrase that tells what they would need. **Remind them that other people will read this, so they should not write down the secret.**
- After they are finished writing, have youth stand in a circle, clear of chairs and food.
- Tell everyone to ball up their paper and on the count of 3 everyone throw that paper at each other, and just keep throwing until you tell them to stop (like a snowball fight).
- When you say stop, everyone finds a “snowball” and returns to their spot.
- Go around the group and ask them to read their papers. Write their answers up on a flipchart or board. Record everything, even those answers that imply there is no way the secret could be shared.
- To save time, when a common word like “trust” or “non-judgmental” gets read, you can ask, “how many other people have that one their sheet?” and put as many check marks beside it.
- List should include (NOTE: in all flipchart debriefs bolded responses must be on the list and discussed):

  - Trust
  - Confidentiality
  - Good listener
  - Understanding
  - Caring
  - Respect

  - Non-judgmental
  - Acceptance
  - A similar experience
  - Warmth
  - Kind
  - Friendship
Debrief:

- Ask youth, “What are the most common responses?”
- “What could this list also represent?” Characteristics of a great friend or support person.
- If “same experience” comes up ask if you have to have had the same experiences in order to be helpful/give resources/etc?
- Notice that words such as expert, certified counselor, college graduate, are not usually on this list. Stress to youth that they do not have to be these things in order to be helpful. Chances are if the things on the list are what we need, then they are also what other youth need.
- Sometimes people will feel really comfortable telling their secrets, while others are more cautious and private. Both are okay, but extremes on either end can be problematic.
- “Bottling things up” can lead to an explosion of emotion, whereas telling everybody everything and having a lack of boundaries can leave us vulnerable.
- Relate the idea of boundaries to being a supporter person to their friends and peers, such as letting people know when you are able/not able to talk, setting times and places for support (i.e. “call me to talk, but not after 10pm”), and how/when to refer someone elsewhere.
Energizers

Winds of Change I
- Youth stay seated.
- The facilitator says “the winds of change blow for anyone who ...(insert statement here)".
- Everyone who shares that statement stands up then performs whatever action is called for.
- Then, the facilitator says another statement.
- Examples of statements are:
  - Has more than 2 siblings - rub their belly
  - Ate breakfast - hop on one leg
  - Has a piercing - give the person next to you a thumbs up
  - Learned something new today - give the person next to you a high five
  - Likes to eat lunch - clap your hands
  - Is wearing black socks - show us
  - Has a driver’s license - turn around in a circle

Winds of Change II (requires one chair per person)
- Youth stay seated in the circle.
- One chair is removed and a facilitator stands in the middle of the circle.
- The one standing says “the winds of change blow for anyone who ...(insert statement here)".
- Everyone who shares that statement then gets up and runs to another chair (ideally, not the chair on either side of them). The last one standing becomes the facilitator and says “the winds of change blow for anyone who (insert another statement here)."
- Examples of statements are:
  - Has more than 2 siblings
  - Ate breakfast
  - Has a piercing
  - Learned something new today
  - Likes to eat...
  - Is wearing black socks
  - Has a driver’s license

Write Your Name Game
- Have the youth write their name using various body parts.
  - Finger
  - Elbow
  - Stomach
  - Head
  - Foot
  - Nose etc..
**Shark Attack** (requires flipchart paper and stereo/music)
- Put a few large sheets of flipchart paper on the floor.
- Have everyone but the facilitator stand in a circle around the paper. Explain that the paper is an island, and the area around is water. Have participants walk around the island while the music plays.
- When they hear the music stop, they will have to get back on the island. Anyone who has any part of their body off the island will get attacked by a shark, meaning they are out.
- After each round, take a little bit of the paper away, because global warming has made the ocean levels rise, and the island is getting smaller and smaller. Continue until the last person is safe on the island.

Optional Debrief:
Sometimes we feel like we have no resources left and we need to work with others to make a plan. We need to communicate effectively to make sure that plan gets made and that we all stick to it.

**Magic Blob**
- An imaginary "blob" is passed around the circle.
- Each person takes it from the previous person in one shape, but passes it to the next person in a new form. (For example, when John passes the blob to Cathy, it is a piece of stretchy taffy. In Cathy's hand it becomes a bouncing ball. But when Gary catches the ball on a dribble, it becomes a very heavy barbell.)
Other Activities

Most Precious Possession
- This exercise could begin or end a regular meeting, or it might be part of a special session for building group communication.
- Each member brings their “most precious possession” and without showing it to the others, places it in a box designated for this purpose.
- Later, each item is taken out, one by one, and the group tries to guess who the object belongs to.
- After the objects have all been taken out and guesses are made, owners claim their objects and tell the group why they are precious.
- We could still ask people how it represents something good about themselves.

Thinking As A Group
- A fun exercise that explores what it is like to ‘think as a group’ involves having individuals emptying their pockets of change (being sure to count it beforehand, so that they get the correct amount back at the end!) and having a fixed amount of time to decide, as a group, what to (hypothetically) spend this money on.
- The facilitator of the group can observe this exercise, noting whether or not there is equal participation among members, how the group comes to a conclusion that everyone agrees on, etc.
- After the exercise, everyone talks about how they felt. Did they feel included in the decision? What were the challenges of ‘thinking as a group’? What were the rewards? This exercise is useful as a group-building exercise, particularly when people first meet. It is fun, as well as educational.
Check-ins or Check-outs

Check-ins or Check-outs
Anytime you are doing a session with a group of youth try to include a check-in and check-out. It allows youth to be able to connect with how they are feeling, encourages them to share how they are doing, and practice listening to the feelings of others. For people working with youth, check-ins/outs give you input about how things are going in the session or with the youth.

Sample check-in/out:
- Have youth say what kind of condom they would be and how they are feeling.
- Put a number of objects in the centre of the circle. Have youth pick out an object. Do go around where everyone explains how the object represents them today.
- In pairs, youth share with a partner how they are feeling for 1 minute. During the go-around the partner says how other is doing. (Paraphrasing Exercise)
- Ask youth to share how they are feeling and their idea of a dream date. This should not be an actual date they have had. (For use when talking about healthy/unhealthy relationships)
- Draw how you are feeling: pass out a scrap or half of a sheet of paper and have youth draw out how they are feeling. It can be a facial expression or anything else. Have youth explain their drawing in a go around to explain how they are feeling.
- Have youth say how they are feeling and one thing (activity/person/animal…etc.) that gives them strength.

Compliment Check-in/out
- Have the youth write a compliment they have been given, heard someone else get or they would like to hear someone say to them, without writing their name or anyone else’s. Remind them that it can be a compliment about their inside or outside.
- When they have all finished writing, pass around a small box or a bag as the check-in object. Have them crumple up their paper. When it is their turn, have them put their paper in the box or bag and say how they are doing today. (Facilitators keep the balls for the checkout)
- At check out, pass the box of compliments around as the check-out object. When it is their turn, have the youth choose a crumpled ball from the box or bag, and read the compliment out loud to the group and share how they are feeling.
Yarn Web Friendship Connections Check-out (requires a ball of yarn)
- Youth stay sitting together in a large circle.
- Ask participants to “think of something they would like to remember about their experiences with this group. This can be a favorite memory or what you found most valuable about this session”.
- Begin the activity with the facilitator holding the yard. While holding one end of the string, roll the yarn ball to someone else for them to share their favorite memory/most valuable thing about the session.
- Tell them to hold onto the string and roll the yarn ball to someone else who will be next to share.
- Continue doing this until everyone has had a turn and the “friendship web” is complete.
- Ask youth to “hold the yarn with both hands, and hold that position.”
- The facilitator walks around the circle and cuts the yarn between their hands. Ask youth to “hold up their right hand and let go of their left. Now everyone can take their piece of yarn away with them.”
- Sometimes there is still 2 people holding one piece of yarn, just ask one of them to drop an end, as there is another piece on the floor in the middle of the circle.

“Why?” & “Because”
- Have prepared “why...” & “because...” slips. (see below)
- Ask youth to fill out one of each.
- Collect them in separate envelopes or containers.
- Ask each youth to say how they are feeling and then to read one “why...” and one “because...”.
- Note: The results of this game are usually hilarious and laughter is an important part of this activity.
- Point out to the youth that communication problems can be common, especially in dating relationships. Miscommunication can lead to distortion, similar to a conversation through a walkie-talkie. This activity illustrates how important it is for us to express ourselves clearly and to listen to what others say.
Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

fs
Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.

Why__________________________________________?
Because__________________________________________.