



We gratefully acknowledge our contributing partners who provided their experience and wisdom to the creation of this activity guide.

**WE THANK YOU!**

*Produced in Partnership By:*



**Department of Youth & Community Development**

# ACTIVITIES CATALOG FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES



## NOTES

*This activity guide was prepared by the Department of Youth and Community Services and Mentor New York. It has been designed to cover a broad range of goals while working with youth, such as team building, trust, and self-awareness.*

*We hope you find these activities useful, effective, and most of all,*

# FUN!

**NOTES**

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## DREAM CATCHER

**DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up**

**Materials: Ball of String**

All participants stand in a close circle, shoulder to shoulder. The person holding the ball of string will say "One thing I have learned is..." stating something that they have learned in the last year from this group. The lead facilitator holds onto an end of the string and then throws the ball across the circle to a willing participant. The participant speaks, unwraps the string, and while holding onto a part of the string throws the ball across the circle to another participant. This should create a string connecting the speaker to the person receiving the ball of string.

Once everyone has gotten the chance to speak, the lead facilitator should restate some of the key learnings, and ask the group what the shape created by the ball of string looks like. The participants will say things like "a spider's web," or "dream catcher." The facilitator can make references to the strength of the web coming from its structure and its interconnectedness, and how the connection that has formed in the group over the course of the work and the need for the support and strength that the group has generated to continue.

Participants can then begin to throw the ball back in reverse order as to unwrap the web. Each person who receives the ball says "I will..." expressing their hopes and dreams for the future. Continue until the ball is back to the lead facilitator. The facilitator can wrap the activity by restating the hopes and dreams of the group, and asking them to remember the support and strength that they have generated as a group from their time together.

## HAIKU

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

A haiku is a type of a poem that is defined by the number of syllables in each line. A classic haiku is one that has three lines, with 5 syllables in first line, 7 syllables in second line, and 5 syllables in third line.

For example,

#### Toast

(5) I really like toast  
 (7) It is yummy when it's hot  
 (5) I like it best cold.

Ask each of the mentees to create their own haikus about what the experience of mentoring means to them. It can be a past-reflective piece, or a future oriented piece for the future. It's up to the participants to define what the topic will be as long as it is related to their experience of mentoring.

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## THIS IS AN OH

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

Each participant gets an object (can be a pencil, book, hat, anything).

They will be instructed on how to both: pass their own object onto the next participant and receive the object being passed to them from the person before them.

The challenge, is, to be able to name what you are passing off and what you are receiving, simultaneously, without confusing yourself.

Ex: Robin motions to pass her pen forward, declaring “this is a pen”. Steph, who is in front of Robin asks “a what?”, and Robin affirms “a pen”, “a what?”, “a pen”. Finally, after three motions to inquire “a what?”, Steph accepts, “OH, A PEN”, and now has possession of the pen to pass.

Note the above example. The hard part for Robin is that she is also playing the role Steph played vis a vis her, by inquiring as to what the person behind HER is passing. So while she is motioning “this is a pen” she is also turning around and asking “a what?” to the person behind her, whom is passing, say, a book.

## PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

#### MATERIALS: bag of pennies

All participants are given a bag with pennies (each participant should have one penny for each member in the group - if there are 20 people, players each should have 20 pennies).

Participants go around the room to each other and trade “a penny for a thought.” Participants trade pennies and positive thoughts about what they think of one another. What an incredible activity and a wonderful way to end an experience!

The activity continues until all participants have shared with every member of the group and have a new bag of “pennies for thoughts.”

## POP THE BALLOON

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

Blow up colorful balloons and write questions on them, such as “what is your favorite memory from this year,” “tell us what you learned in the past year,” or “what do you hope to achieve going forward,” and place them around the room. The participants take turns picking up a random balloon and reading the question out loud. Everyone in the circle answers the question, and the person who picked up the balloon gets to pop it. If it’s a large group, blow up a balloon for each of the participant if feasible so that each mentee can have a turn picking and popping a balloon. If it’s a smaller group, blow up more balloons than the number of participants so that each mentee can have several turns.

## SKIP 5

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

Have the group form a circle.

Go around the circle counting in order.

If the number which lands on your turn is a multiple of 5 (5,10, 15, 20...) you must say SKIP. The count continues after skip.

Ex: 1-2-3-4-SKIP-6- 7-8-9-SKIP... Continue as long as you can before laughter breaks up the group.

## TOILET PAPER GAME

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

**MATERIALS:** Several rolls of toilet paper

Gather everyone, mentors and mentees, into a circle. If your group is large, you can have two circles going at the same time.

Pass around a roll of toilet paper. Ask each person to take as many sheets as he/she wants but they must take at LEAST one sheet.

After everyone has some sheet(s), explain the rule of the game, which is...

Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know—one thing for every sheet that you have pulled off the roll.

The facts can be serious and important or just plain silly. It just another fun way to learn about each other.

## BOX OF LOVE

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

**Materials:** Tissue Box. Decorative materials such as pipe cleaners, colored paper, crayons, etc.

Hand out empty tissue boxes to each of the mentees and ask them to write their names on it and decorate it. Once completed, place the tissue boxes around the room and hand out sheets of paper to mentees. On each sheet of paper, the mentees write one thing they appreciate about each person in the room, folds it, and places it in the person's tissue box.

Gather around in a circle and ask each mentee to read out loud their favorite pieces from their tissue box.

## BOOK OF AUTOGRAPHS

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up  
**Materials:** Small Journals and pen/pencils

Hand out journals to each of the mentees, and have them go around the room and ask each person to write something for the other person and autograph it. The Mentors should take part in this activity as well. Once all participants have written in everyone's journal, come together as a group to discuss what their experience together meant to them.

## SOLEMN AND SILENT

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

The instructor explains that this exercise will take self control. Members pair back to back. On the count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in the eyes, and then try to remain solemn and serious.

No speaking!

The first to smile or laugh must sit down.

All who remain standing then take a new partner and the activity continues until only one person has not smiled or laughed. (The second round of player involves two teams competing to outlast each other.)

If you get a pair at the end who are both keeping a straight face, the rest of the group can act as hecklers to disrupt them.

## CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

Ask for five volunteers to make up one team, and another five to make up another.

The teams will line up facing one another. You will ask them to examine the team opposite themselves to remember everything they are wearing and how they are wearing it! Now one team must turn around for 30 seconds while the other team gets a chance to change their appearance in 10 ways (they may trade shoes, untuck a shirt, hang the rope of their key chain out of the opposite pocket, or undo their hair... whatever they want to try to make it difficult for the other team to realize how their appearance has changed).

Once the 30 seconds are up, the challenger team turns around and must determine what changed. Whichever team can list the most changes out of 10 wins.

If five more students want to play they can line up to play the winner.

## SPENT

### DESCRIPTION: High School

[www.playspent.org](http://www.playspent.org)

This is an online activity meant to engage and educate mentees about managing their finances and making difficult decisions. On the website [playspent.org](http://playspent.org), visitors are challenged to find a job, pay all of their bills and be able to make their money last for 30 days. Early on in the game, it becomes increasingly apparent that the margin for failure is very high. One wrong decision can make all the difference. Mentors can use this activity to influence a mentee's relationship to money and improve their critical thinking skills.

## STOP DISASTERS!

**DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up**

<http://stem-works.com/external/activity/128>

This is a disaster simulation game designed to educate youth on different types of natural disaster and different ways communities can prepare for it. The role of the player in this game is to plan and construct a safer environment for the chosen scenario. The players is asked to assess the disaster risk and try to limit the damage when natural hazards strike, using critical thinking skills and mathematics.

## SHOE FACTORY

**DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up**

Have the group stand in a large circle shoulder to shoulder. Then have everyone remove their shoes and put them in the center. After the group has formed a pile with their shoes, the leader has everyone choose two different shoes other than their own.

They should put them on their feet (halfway if they are too small). The group then needs to successfully match the shoes and put them in proper pairs by standing next to the individual wearing the other shoe.

This will probably result in a tangled mess—and lots of giggles!

## FIND SOMEONE WHO...

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

Find someone in the room who fits the description. Fill in his or her name (and any other information asked for). You may only use each person's name once (and don't forget that you can use your own name as well).

#### Example list:

- Wears contact lenses \_\_\_\_\_
- Took A Shower This Morning \_\_\_\_\_
- Went to College \_\_\_\_\_
- Ate Breakfast this Morning \_\_\_\_\_  
What did he/she eat? \_\_\_\_\_
- Born in the same month as you \_\_\_\_\_
- Is the oldest of 7 Siblings \_\_\_\_\_
- Likes to Eat Spinach \_\_\_\_\_
- Owns a Bike \_\_\_\_\_
- Speaks more than 1 Language \_\_\_\_\_
- Has one thing in Common with You \_\_\_\_\_  
What is it \_\_\_\_\_
- Has had a Mentor before \_\_\_\_\_
- Who was their Mentor \_\_\_\_\_
- Born Outside the US \_\_\_\_\_  
What country \_\_\_\_\_

## MAKE A FLAPPY BIRD GAME

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

<https://studio.code.org/flappy/1>

Click or type in the link above to find a game where you can learn the basics of coding and build the classic game, Flappy Bird! This activity educates the players on the basics coding by using building blocks to explain the process behind coding, while allowing the players to immediately see the product of their creation.

## BUILDING A GALAXY WITH CODE

**DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up**

<https://code.org/starwars>

Click or type in the link above to find a game where you can learn the basics of coding while helping the characters of Star Wars build a galaxy! This activity takes the players through the basics of coding through fun and engaging process. Difficulty level can be adjusted by either choosing to use drag-drops only, or use both drag-drop blocks and Javascript.

## TWO TRUTHS & A LIE

**DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up**

Give the group some time to write down two things about themselves that are true, and one thing that is a “lie.”

Each group member will then share these facts about themselves and the rest of the group has to identify which “fact” is actually a “lie.”

## BEACH BALL

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

**MATERIALS:** beach ball

Get a large inflatable beach ball and use a permanent marker to write all of the following questions on it. The resulting tool is an “icebreaker ball.” You can use it in a large group and throw it around.

The person who catches it has to answer the question touching their left thumb.

Example questions:

If you talk in your sleep, what do you imagine you say?

What is the first thing you do when you get out of bed?

What is your favorite movie scene?

If you were to treat yourself to the ‘finer things’ what would you treat yourself to?

If your life was being turned into a feature length movie, who would play you? And why?

What sport is the most fun to play and why?

What is the best advice you ever got?

## NUMBER MEMORY GAME

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

<http://stem-works.com/external/activity/389>

Type in or click on the link above to try the number memory game for kids and see how good you are at remembering what numbers are hidden behind the squares. Select between easy, medium, and hard settings. The harder the setting, the more squares you will have to match together. Find all the hidden pairs of numbers as fast as you can!

You can replicate this game off-line with a deck of cards.

## MAKE YOUR OWN RAINBOW

**DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up**

**MATERIALS: A glass of water; White Paper; A Sunny Day**

Learn to make a rainbow with this fun science experiment for kids. Using just a few simple every day items, you can find out how rainbows work while enjoying an interactive, hands on activity that's perfect for kids.

1. Take a glass of water and paper to a part of the room with sunlight (near a window is ideal)
2. Hold the glass of water above the paper and watch as sunlight passes through the glass of water, refracts (bends), and forms a rainbow of colors on your sheet of paper.
3. Try holding the glass of water at different heights and angles to see if it has a different effect.

What's happening?

Rainbows form in the sky when sunlight refracts (bends) as it passes through raindrops. It acts in the same way when it passes through the glass of water. The sunlight refracts separating it into the colors red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

Discuss where else you might have seen a rainbow: In a water fountain, mist of a waterfall, etc.

Adapted from : <http://stem-works.com/external/activity/261>

## STAND UP/SIT DOWN

**DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up**

This game is a great icebreaker so people can see things they might have in common with others—or differences! Have everyone seated in a circle. Ask them to stand up if they fit the question and then ask them to sit down.

Ex: Stand up if you like hip-hop. Ok thanks, please be seated. Then go to the next question. Feel free to make up your own questions!

Stand if you like to cook.

Stand if you like to work out.

Stand if you want to go to college.

Stand if you know how to swim.

Stand if you like to watch scary movies.

Stand if you like broccoli

Stand if you like to sleep late.

Stand if you like the Yankees.

Stand if you know what you want your career to be.

Stand if you have brothers or sisters.

Stand if you are a twin.

Stand if you know how to juggle.

## MIRRORS

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

Split the group up into two lines, facing one another. Each participant should be facing somebody directly across them.

Ask one team to volunteer to go first. Everyone on that line has a few minutes to generate a series of movements to be mimicked by the person across from them. (Each individual has their own movement.)

Each individual on the “mimicking” team is to move in cohesion with the movements modeled for them. (As if though they are the mirror image )

## MY PERSONAL RESUME (Continued)

### DESCRIPTION: High School

For personal interests or skills, they can talk about being on the basketball team and even list the team’s win/ loss record or a game when they played an important role. Maybe they’re on the volleyball team or the de- bate team.

Perhaps they help at their church or house of worship. Any of these things can help them see that they have value AND that they can, in fact, take on things that make them proud of themselves.

Save copies of the resumes and come back to them in 6-9 months. See if the students have added any new things that should be reflected on their revised resumes.

## MY PERSONAL RESUME

### DESCRIPTION: High School

This activity helps mentees to think about the qualities they have that are admirable, the accomplishments that they made and the goals for things that they want to do.

Bring in a sample resume that shows the general categories that appear on a resume: Education, work experience, personal interests, personal awards or accomplishments, goal.

Even though mentees are still only in middle school, they can begin to describe the positive things about themselves and think about what other things they want to tackle in the future.

So for education, they could list the courses that they have taken, especially ones that are a little harder than average. If they did well for a marking period or on a special test or report, they could add that. They can think about what career they might want to have and think about how their future resume might need to show some special courses.

For work experience, they could list the community service that they might have done in the mentoring program (like planting trees or cleaning up the neighborhood). They might list babysitting for a younger sibling or walking a neighborhood's dog. Perhaps they helped a friend's family move or clean out a basement.

## WHAT ARE YOU DOING? IMPROV

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

This activity is set up in a tournament format.

Two participants are selected to square off. First participant begins to emulate an action and role plays along (ex: acts as if though flying a kite). The opposing participant asks: "What are you doing?" and the participant in character must respond, without pause, by saying something that is totally inconsistent with the actions he/she is portraying (ex: "I'm walking a dog" \*slipping up by saying "flying a kite" would result in elimination).

The opponent then takes on the role of the mistaken statement, thus in the case illustrated above, acts as if though they are walking a dog. They are then asked "What are you doing?" and without pause must say anything BUT "walking a dog" (ex: brushing my teeth).

The turn then gets put back on the original participant and the activity is prolonged until somebody either slips and tells the truth about what they are doing, or fails to think of another action to play on.

## IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, BUT HOW YOU SAY IT

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

Have the group sitting in a circle

Explain: "The purpose of this activity is to understand how tone of voice can change what is being said, and can express a range of emotions." The object of the game is to find different ways of saying the same phrase and discovering different subtexts depending on intonation and facial expression

Pass a phrase around and ask the next person to repeat it in their own way.

Examples: *I don't believe it*  
*You're cool*  
*Please*  
*Oh no*

Once you have passed a couple of these around and we've got them live, you may set up a scenario for them to embody while projecting a phrase.

Ex: You are opening a box on Christmas. Pull out an imaginary sweater and say: *Oh, Thank you*

## MASKS

**DESCRIPTION:** High School

**MATERIALS:** Paper

Participants are given a piece of paper (preferably poster board).

They are asked to cut out eyes and a mouth however they would like.

Participants are then asked to decorate the face. One side represents what they feel people see/know/believe about them (on the outside).

The other side represents what he/she feels about themselves (things going on inside, what people do not necessarily know or see).

The participants then share with the group if they feel comfortable.

## CODES TO LIVE BY (Continued)

**DESCRIPTION:** High School

*A king that sits on a throne of judgments scatters all evil with his eyes; do not judge others; everyone has their own reason for being the way that they are*

*Learn something new everyday*

*Everything happens for a reason, which leaves no room for coincidence*

*When you get down... Count your blessings*

*Hard work pays off*

*Be original and never be afraid to be yourself*

*Home, is where the heart is*

This activity can be used to create a project (e.g. design a plaque/manifesto and paste it to the front of your journal). Or, it can be a reflection exercise. This exercise helps mentees reflect on their own ethics and can help establish routines based on accountability and mentees' values (e.g. during a 1 on 1, if we are speaking to him about a struggle he's been dealing with and it is something that in his motto he declared opposition to, you can challenge him to reflect on whether or not he is following through with his own values).

This can also be done with all of the mentors and the mentees would then guess which mentor wrote each phrase.

## FREEZE! TAG-TEAM IMPROVISATION

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

Organize group into a circle. Two people enter the center of the circle (the stage) and begin acting. Note: generally the first two actors have a difficult time coming up with a scene, but they should be encouraged to improvise, to react and respond to the other actor.

After about a minute, someone from the group says, "Freeze." The two actors stop in the middle of their action. The spectator then enters the stage and tags one of the actors, who then rejoins the group. The spectator then assumes the exact expression and position of the actor he/she tagged-out of the action.

Based on the positions and expressions the actors are in, a completely new scene is improvised. Spectators will learn to freeze the improvisation when the actors are in difficult, compromising, and telling positions, in order imagine the next possible scene. This continues until everyone in the group has acted at least once or twice.

This exercise encourages spectators to be actors, and to invent improvised scenes based on what they see.

## IMAGE THEATER

### DESCRIPTION: High School & Up

Have the group reflect on a memory befitting the theme of the class (memory of a struggle at home, or memory of a time he felt embarrassed at school, etc).

Choose one participant to go first and explain to the rest of the group members that they will volunteer to be sculpted.

The sculptors are asked to make a picture of a particular scene, using their bodies. Issues to sculpt are limitless, but some possibilities are: the family, education, male-female relations, immigration, labor and unemployment, violence/ crime, poverty, racism, sexuality, etc.

Each sculptor makes a static statue/image with the 2-4 group members bodies. The sculptor cannot speak to the group she/he is trying to sculpt. The sculptor must either show the individuals what positions/expressions she/he wants, or the sculptor must move them into the desired positions/expressions.

## CODES TO LIVE BY

### DESCRIPTION: High School

In this lesson we documented our own list of mottos/ codes to live by. Mentors were invited to create a list of ethics/codes they live by that could be expressed as clichés.

One mentor brought his list of 10 sayings in and I cut it up into 10 strips and passed each saying around so that the mentees could read it out loud to the rest of the group.

As each was read out, I facilitated a reflection of what they thought each meant and whether or not they related to it (raise your hand if you agree/ disagree why).

After sharing all of them, I asked them to guess which mentor wrote it. Hands raised, I took a few guesses, and then I shared the correct answer.

They then had a chance to sit for 5 minutes and brainstorm any phrases of life/ mottos they have heard before and could relate to. They shared it back to the circle and in the same manner, were invited to break it down into examples, etc.

Here is one mentor's list:

*You reap what you sow; you always get what you give; what goes around comes around*

*Never short-hand yourself; ultimately, we control our own destiny.*

*Write a new poem every week*

## CAMPUS SCAVENGER HUNT

### DESCRIPTION: High School Students

Once your mentee feels comfortable on a college campus, try doing this scavenger hunt as a fun addition to your campus tour! Remember to bring a camera or use the camera on your cell phone. Each item is worth one point, unless otherwise noted!

- ◇ Where do first year (freshman) students live? \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Pick up a copy of a free college paper. What is it called?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Ask a student the name of the mascot. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Visit the financial aid office and pick up a FAFSA form. Receive a bonus point if you find information about a scholarship you qualify for!
- ◇ Talk to three students and find out their name, major, and hometown. Each student is worth one point!
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Take a picture of a computer lab. Where was it located? \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Find the main campus library, ask a librarian what the normal hours are:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ What are the names of two campus cafeterias or restaurants:
  - ◇ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Find the fitness center. What are their hours? \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Find the name of two student groups or associations on campus:
  - ◇ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◇ \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Take a picture of college students studying. What was the location?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Find the admissions office and pick up a copy of the application. When are they due? \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Locate a public bus stop on or near campus. What is the name of the public transportation system? \_\_\_\_\_

Adopted from knowhow2go Mentor workbook

## TAPS

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

### MATERIALS: a basketball or similar large round ball

Taps is commonly played with a basketball, and requires that participants lightly toss a ball around with the spontaneous aim of attempting to trick the person to whom they intend on passing.

This is a fun activity which can be played both as a competitive and team work/ synchronizing activity.

## POSITIVE BOMBARDMENT

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

One member is selected to be the recipient of positive feedback from the rest of the group.

Once everyone has had a chance to give that member the “gift” of feedback, another person is chosen and the process is repeated.

This can be done in writing with members writing a positive comment to each member and putting them all in an envelope with the person’s name on it, or verbally.

This also can be adapted so the members first give some constructive criticism and then some positive feedback.

Someone can volunteer to take notes and present the comments to the mentees to keep

## NYU TOUR/RIPLEY’S

### DESCRIPTION: High School

We went on a tour of NYU and a trip to Ripley's Believe It Or Not! This was a treat for the mentees who have been consistently attending the mentoring program.

The teens learned from a NYU alumna about the type of college life that they could expect as a NYU student. Mentees also learned about the buildings where freshmen take classes, the dormitories and the library, which is its own building. We also toured the basketball and workout facilities, and learned about the current cost to attend NYU.

Mentees asked about whether students were able to work while attending college. The mentees learned a lot for their first college/university tour.

Afterwards, we took the train up to 42nd Street, to Ripley's Believe It Or Not! The teens had a blast learning about things from all over the world that were funny and not familiar to them.

Overall, the mentees had the most fun in the "Black Hole" where even though it made some of them nauseous, they thought it was really cool.

## LIFELINES

### DESCRIPTION: High School

Each participant draws a line on a piece of paper to represent the highs, lows, significant events, turning points, etc. of his/her life to date (can also project into the future).

Members then share their lifelines, and other members ask questions about each other's lifelines.

This exercise can also be done with pipe cleaners and verbal explanations.

#### Highs

Birth Teenager College

Childhood High School

#### Lows

First Job

Grad School

## UP IN ARMS

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

Every group member must find a partner of approximately equal height and weight, if possible.

The partners will lock arms with their backs to one another. With arms remaining locked at all times, the partners will sit down on the ground, kick their legs out straight, and try to stand back up.

Then groups of four will try the same thing. Then groups of eight, sixteen, and eventually, the entire group together.

This is the perfect activity to begin a **trust sequence**

## THE HUMAN KNOT

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

The group starts in a tight circle.

Everyone in the group reaches across the circle with their right hand to grab another group member's right hand.

The group then reaches in with their left hand to grab a different group member's left hand.

The object is to untangle the group without letting go of hands until a circle is formed.

## PROGRESSIVE STORY

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

For this exercise, a group of people must know one another and feel comfortable discussing personal issues.

The facilitator begins the story by setting the initial scene and mood. (The mood will alter as a result of the addition of more content to the story.) The story can start with the following examples (or others): "On my way to class the other day..." or "A good friend called last night and..." or "I had the most amazing weekend! I..."

In no special order, members of the group then take over the story. They add another element to the plot. The main point is to make sure everyone adds something. The progression of the story indicates where the group members are emotionally and is representative of what is high on their lists of priorities, concerns, and thoughts.

This exercise spurs on creativity and can reveal a lot about a staff's collective state of mind. The facilitator plays a big role in interpreting what is said by each person.

**Note:**

Set Ground Rules: Keep Confidentiality and be accepting.

## GROUP AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

This exercise introduces new ways of listening in connection with others. Group autobiographies can easily be developed into a script, or themes can be incorporated into a performance.

Before beginning this activity, allow the story-tellers to reflect on their life-experiences for 5-10 minutes by playing instrumental music. No talking should occur during this time.

The individuals take turns speaking autobiographically about their lives. The individuals should be factual. They should tell the group stories, either from their childhood or recent past. They can tell the group what their family was/is like, where they grew up, what their schooling was/is like. Only one person speaks at a time and speaks until interrupted by another story-teller. The interruptions should be erratic, so that the monologues vary in length. In other words, the individuals might interrupt each other very quickly, or might allow, from time to time, someone to speak a bit longer. Imagine a remote control quickly changing channels on a TV and then pausing on another channel for a bit longer.

Story-tellers should switch from memory to memory, building off the content they hear from other story-tellers. The story-tellers will begin to collaborate, listening and relating through what they hear in timing, tone, and attitude. Pieces of their stories intersperse with pieces of others. Affected by what they hear from others in the group, individuals may recast the emotional value of their own autobiographies.

This can help shift their perceptions of themselves and others!

## PASS THE HOOP

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

**MATERIALS:** A Hula Hoop

We ask the kids to get in a circle and hold hands. Once they've done this we unlink the hands of two of the kids and slip the hoop in their arms, then link them up again.

The group must now pass the hoop around back to the starting point without breaking the circle, keeping their hands together.

They will figure out on their own that in order for this to work they must each bend low and duck through the hoop till they can each pass it over their head and down the arm to the next person.

## THE SINKING BOAT

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

For this activity we need a tarp, (a floor mat may work but it might be too rigid).

All of the kids crowd onto the tarp. (If there are too many kids and we happen to have two tarps then we can make two teams and have a crowd of them on one and a crowd of them on the other or you can create two groups if there is one mat, and have one go first and the other second, while timing them to see who does it the fastest.).

We now pose the challenge: "You are on a boat that is sinking fast! The only way to survive is to somehow turn the boat over before it sinks! Your mission is to overturn the boat without losing anyone to the deep ocean. If anyone's foot comes off the mat, that person has drowned and must come off the mat! Which ever team can overturn the boat the quickest, while losing the least amount of people wins!"

The kids will have to figure out that in order to overturn the tarp they must slowly crowd over, while peeling the tarp over beneath themselves, then cross over person by person to the overturned side.

## SERVICE ACTIVITY/PARK CLEANUP

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

**MATERIALS:** Garbage Bags; Plastic gloves

For their service event, mentees decided that they wanted to clean up all of the playgrounds in the Dyckman Houses because many of them and their families use the playgrounds on a daily basis.

One of the mentees, Jayden said, *"I want our playgrounds to be clean especially because my brothers, sisters and I play here all the time. I don't like seeing my park dirty"*.

The participants really took ownership of the project and even had some of the older teens join in. The service day was successful because it taught the kids to value their community and the importance of volunteerism.

You may partner with other organizations, local businesses and Parks & Rec department for ideas and supplies as well!

## TRUST WALK

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

**This is an incredible trust activity!** Every group member is either blind-folded, not blind-folded, but promises not to peek. The leaders of the group will organize the group in a straight line or in pairs, singles, etc. The leader will make sure the group begins by holding one another's hands in a circle to help make them feel comfortable. The leader will lead the blinded group members around, periodically leaving them by themselves (but always holding on to something like a tree, fence, sign, etc., and NEVER for any great length of time), or with new people to hold on to. **THE KEY TO THIS ACTIVITY IS NO TALKING.**

If there is an object that needs to be stepped over, the leader should raise the hand of the group member, the next person will do the same to warn the next person, and so on. If there is an object that is overhead, the leader will lower the arm of the blinded group member, indicating they should duck down, and the chain will continue in the same manner as for a raised object. The leader can organize this activity according to their group. Leader should make sure everyone feels comfortable participating.

If someone is nervous, they could become the leader's partner or just watch.

## DOES IT HELP OR DOES IT HURT

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

This activity asks mentors and mentees to think about how their actions can make the mentoring relationship work better. Talk through each action below and discuss whether it helps or hurts when you're trying to get to know somebody then place the action in the appropriate category.

Hurts

Helps

Ignore Them  
Be Respectful  
Agree on What to do Together  
Arrive Late  
Tell Them About Yourself  
Be Mean to Them  
Smile  
Ask for Their Opinion  
Talk about Life Together  
Learn Something New Together  
Take Them for Granted  
Do What you Say you Will Do  
Let Them Know What You Appreciate About Them

## WHY ARE YOU SO SPECIAL?

**DESCRIPTION:** Elementary School & Up

This activity will help mentees identify people they admire and respect. Ask each person to think of someone that he/she admires. This person can be anybody (family, friend, celebrity...). Have each mentee and mentor write the answers to these questions:

Who is this person and what do you admire about him/her?

What makes this person so special to you?

What qualities / characteristics of this person would you like to have?

Make a whole list.

Make a list of the different qualities that people admire.

Think about how to develop some of these qualities in ourselves

## BLIND TREASURE HUNT

**DESCRIPTION:** Middle School & Up

**MATERIALS:** 1-3 Objects; Blindfold

For this activity all participants need to be lined up against the wall.

Identify one individual to be the metal detector and one to be the blind man. Tie a blindfold or a piece of cloth around the blind mans face and have the metal detector person walk a few yards away and turn around to face the group.

Now that the metal detector person is facing the group and cannot see the field behind them (they cannot turn around, can only take signals from the group), and the blind man/woman is ready; throw the three objects out into the field so that only the group on the wall knows where the objects have landed.

The group must use their waving arms and hand signals to direct the blind man (without making a sound). But, the blind man cannot see this signals, which is where the metal detector comes into play. The metal detector person, facing the kids on the wall, gets to yell out 'left, right, back, back, back, stop. right, come in a little, keep going'. The activity becomes interesting because the blindfolded person finds out how hard it is to find something without vision, and confusion is created between the youth on the wall trying to dictate to the metal detector.

## MACHINE

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

The object of this game is to have a group create a machine using their own bodies (i.e. ceiling fan, hot air balloon, watch, etc)

Each person is required to be accountable for one noise and one motion of the machine. The group members should then put their motions and sounds together to create the machine.

Give each group about 5 minutes to work together and prepare, and then have the groups present it.

## MY PERFECT DAY

### DESCRIPTION: Elementary School & Up

This is all about imagining the best day that you can. It's okay to go swimming and snowmobiling on your perfect day because it's imaginary.

Here's what to do:

1. Close your eyes and imagine yourself doing your favorite thing. Write down what you imagine
2. Close your eyes again and think of some other things that you love to do. Write them down, too
3. Imagine who you would like to do some of these things with. Would it be the same people for each one or different ones for different activities or parts of the day?
4. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

After you've done this exercise, ask your mentor to create his/her perfect day. Compare notes!

#### Example format:

My perfect day

I would do:

I would go to:

The weather would be:

I would ask these people to join me:

I would eat:

## FOOTSY RACE

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

Have the group line-up.

Draw a line or lay down some objects to mark the middle of the room

Instruct them to put their feet together in whatever way they choose, because they will be walking for the line WITHOUT losing contact at the feet. (bound)

DO NOT INFORM the way they should and shouldn't be doing this. Allow them to strategize through trial and error. They may soon find it is easier if they also link arms, or if they link between ankles, or whatever, BUT it is only fun if they are forced to realize it themselves

Note: With larger groups you may split them into teams and make this activity a race.

## CREATE A GREAT ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

### DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

Have the mentor and mentees work together to help create an advertising campaign to recruit more mentors.

Start out by making a list of the reasons that someone would want to be a mentor (benefits – to the mentee and to the mentor). Encourage them to be creative and even funny. Make as long a list as you can.

Now take some of the reasons and think about which medium would be best to get people to hear that reason. Should it be a Facebook ad? Should it be on the radio or TV? Should it run in a newspaper or magazine? Should there be an email campaign?

Mentors and mentees can even think about designing what the ads/outreach should look like.

If they are happy with the marketing campaign, perhaps the mentoring program can use one or more of the ideas to recruit the next group of mentors!