Intended Audience

* *Senior staff in paraprofessional staff meetings*
* *Hall Council advisors in executive board meetings*
* *ILO advisors in executive board meetings*
* *Student leaders as part of a student organization on campus*

Learning Outcomes

*Through participation in this training session, students will be able to:*

* Understand the importance of team builders and ice breakers in their place of work or organization.
* Identify how and when to use team builders and ice breakers.
* Implement team builders and ice breakers as the facilitator.
* Be able to share with others the importance of team builders and ice breakers to coworkers/peers.

Sharing Content

*Facilitate a group discussion around the importance of team builders and ice breakers.*

Please be aware that some people may come into this discussion with a lot of experience of working on a team, while others have little to none. *Supply the group with reading materials and activities to be fully informed and engaged.*

Exercises and Activities

*Aspects of the lesson that include group interaction and/or engagement are as followed:*

* Engage in a large-group ice breaker or team builder- *Section 1*
* Engaged in a large group reflection and discussion- *Section 1*
* Engaged in a short small group discussion- *Section 2*
* Fill out the “Notes and Reflection Worksheet” and participate in a “think-pair-share” small-group discussion
* Take notes and ask questions as needed

**Activity Prep for Facilitator (Time: 15-30 Minutes)**

Before beginning the lesson/activity complete the following:

1. Read through the entirety of The Importance of Ice Breakers and Team Builders Lesson Plan and the following articles (found on resources page)

a) **Read** *What Is an Ice breaker?* By Susan Heathfield

b) **Read** Icebreakers & Team Builders. Published by the College of William and Mary

c) **Read pg. 523-524** *Team Development Interventions:* Evidence Based Approaches of Improving Teamwork. By Lacerenza et.al

d) **Review** *Practicing Inclusion: Icebreakers and Team Builders for Diversity.* By Liza A. Talusan (a resource)

2. Determine who your audience is and select the ice breakers and team builders from the list that you would like the group to participate in during this meeting.

3. As the facilitator, prep all needed materials for the activity and determine the purpose of the meeting. Ask yourself, what do you want the participants to get out of this activity?

Needed materials:

* Printed copies of “Icebreakers & Team Builders” published by the College of William and Mary (enough for each participant)
* Printed copies of the Notes and Reflection Worksheet (enough for each participant)
* Pens/Pencils

Once all these tasks are completed, reflect on your own personal experience interacting with ice breakers and team builders. You will need this when introducing the activity and making meaningful connections with the group.

***Overview: (Time: 2 Minutes)***

*\*Facilitator note- at no point in this lesson should participants feel pressured to share in large or small group as these responses may be personal and individual.*

Before we start, I just want to walk you through what our time together will look like this morning/today/tonight.

* Reflection check-in
* Icebreaker time
* Small group debrief
* Discussion: What is an icebreaker/team builder?
* When to use icebreakers and team builders
* Other considerations when planning
* Notes and reflection worksheet
* Group discussion & closing

***Section 1: Break the Ice- An Introduction: (Time: 10 Minutes)***

**Part 1:** *To kick off the session, you, as the facilitator will ask the group to reflect.*

“How do you feel in this moment? Are you comfortable in this space? Are you excited, happy, sad? Now take a moment or two to think about how you feel. You can either write it down or keep the thoughts in your head. Up to you.”

**Part 2:** *Select an ice breaker for the group to participate in as an introduction. Depending on your group, you may want one that helps you learn names and hobbies. For groups who already know each other pick a fun game or exercise.*

*You can find a list of different icebreakers embedded within Heatherfield’s article “What is an Icebreaker” and other resources for this lesson.*

**Part 3:** *Small-group discussion*

“Since we have taken the time to “break the ice” I want you to think about how you feel in this moment. Like before, think about if you feel comfortable in this space? Now I want you to compare your feelings. How has your feelings changed before doing the icebreaker?”

Give the group a minute or two to reflect. When they are done, ask for a few to share their thoughts to initiate a small-group discussion. It is important that the group takes away the power of an icebreaker. Help them understand that making others feel more confident in the spaces they create really makes a difference.

***Section 3:***  ***What is an Icebreaker and Team Builder? (Time: 5 Minutes)***

Transition the group into a discussion about what team builders and icebreakers are. Be sure to ask about what they believe is their intended purpose. This will serve as a baseline to help you assess what the group already knows. Some potential prompts are written as followed:

1. How would you describe a team builder or icebreaker to someone who has never done one before?

2. When do you use an icebreaker or team builder?

3. How are they the same and how are they different?

4. What kinds of experiences (good or bad) have you had with team builders or icebreakers?

Comment on the groups’ discussion and then provide a handout from the College of William and Mary called “Icebreakers and Team Builders.” As a group, read through the definitions provided for Icebreakers and team builders.

***Section 4: When should we use them? (Time: 10-15 minutes)***

*In this portion of the lesson, you, as the facilitator will share content information with the group. This should be provided in a lecture style with room for comments and question from the group as needed.*

**Part 1 (Icebreakers)**

As described by Haverfield’s article, “What Is an Icebreaker?” there are three main types of icebreakers. These are to be used based on the environment and purpose of the session you are providing for the group.

1*.* *Icebreakers that are* ***just for fun***

When participants already know each other, and is used to help warm up the group through laughter and conversation. These can also be used when the participants are strangers. It allows them to learn something about each other. For example, you could have everyone share their favorite flavor of ice cream.

2*.* *Icebreakers as an* ***introduction to the topic***

Use this type when you want to encourage group to think about what they will be discussing during the session. This could potentially generate some laughter and discussion as well, but it more geared towards the purpose of the session. For example, you could as the group to share personal experiences with team builders before jumping in the session on team building.

3. *Icebreakers based on the* ***purpose of the session***

This is intended to open up the topic of the session with an icebreaker that will allow the group to dive straight into the session. For example, if you were going to have a meeting about recruiting new members for your staff or organization, an icebreaker you could use would be one that asks each participant to share their vision for the future of the group. This would provide a good transition into recruitment as you discuss how to effectively reach this goal.

**Part 2 (Team Builders)**

As discussed earlier, we use team builders as a way to foster improvement within a group. In 2018, the American Psychologist published research focused on evidence-based approaches for improving teamwork. Part of this study focused on team builders and included the following information:

* If to be used efficiently, team builder should focus on the following areas:
  + Goal setting
  + Interpersonal-relationship management
  + Role clarification
  + Problem solving
* Organizations should clarify the needs of the team to determine the most appropriate team building components. The more the group can relate and connect the team builder to their own work, the better.
* Overall, it is important to remember that team builders will increase the **trust** that members have within that group, thus leading to better coordination and performance as a whole.

***Section 5: Other Considerations When Planning (Time: 5-10 minutes)***

*\*Facilitator note- This is a section that may bring up questions or conflict from participants. The main goal of talking about these topics is to be inclusive of all people while aiming to build community through icebreakers and team builders.*

As the leader of the team builder or icebreaker you must be aware of the needs of your group. When picking a team builder or icebreaker make sure that it is accessible to everyone in the group. Meaning that it is accessible to participants of all background, experiences, and beliefs.

Be prepared to make modifications as needed. (i.e physical mobility, visual needs, auditory needs, language needs, inclusion of diverse structures- *language that could potentially exclude others). (Talusan, 2012)*. Modifications should be made for the entire activity/whole group, when possible, so you’re not singling out anyone.

Questions to ask yourself when planning an activity in relation to the above topics:

* **Did the activity show bias?** (Did anyone use derogatory slang, is the name of the game offensive, is cultural appropriation involved, etc.)
* **Was everyone able to participate?** (based on their physical, auditory, or other abilities)
* **Was the space you held the icebreaker accessible to all?** (What was the path/journey someone would have to take to get to the location of your activity? Could anyone get there?)
* **Would the activity be against any participant’s religion?** (Is there a part of the activity that would make someone not want to participate due to their beliefs?)
* **Would the activity be triggering for a specific population?** (showing a traumatic or triggering video clip. Example: showing a video with police brutality, protesting of some kind, political or polarizing videos, etc.)
* **Are you able to use a microphone during the activity so everyone can hear?** (Instead of only using a microphone when someone needs it, ask everyone to use the microphone so you don’t single-out the individual with a potential hearing impairment.)
* **Can you address the group using gender neutral language?** (example: “hey everyone” “hey everybody”, they or person’s name will move over here and then they/person’s name will move here)

***Section 6: Group Discussion and Closing (Time: 10-15 minutes)***

*\*Facilitator note- at no point in this lesson should participants feel pressured to share in large or small group as these responses may be personal and individual.*

As formal assessment and large-group discussion, the group will participant in a “think-pair-share” activity.

* **Think:** Participants will reflect on the lesson via the Notes and Reflection Worksheet section of the lesson. Provide 3-5 minutes for this activity.
* **Pair:** Once finished, ask the participants to turn to a neighbor and exchange thoughts on their responses. Provide 2-3 minutes for these conversations.
* **Share:** Have the group come together in a large group discussion and ask participants to share their thoughts with the group. Or share interesting takeaways that their peers had that they would not have noticed in the first place. Allow 5 minutes for the discussion.

**Notes and Reflection Worksheet**

**Lesson: Building Meaningful Relationships**

1. What is the difference between an icebreaker and team builder?

2. What are some things you learned in this session that you did not know prior? How can you apply this to future experiences?

3. How will you use this new information to better your group or organization? (Think specifically about your own leadership role, pick a scenario or two and apply this content).

**Resources**

College of William & Mary. Icebreakers & Team Builders. (n.d.). Retrieved June 11, 2020, from https://www.wm.edu/offices/studentleadershipdevelopment/documents/icebreakersandteambuilders.pdf

Heatherfield, S. (2018). What Is an Icebreaker? *The Balance Careers.*

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-an-ice-breaker-1918156>

Lacerenza, C. N., Marlow, S. L., Tannenbaum, S. I. & Salas, E. (2018) Team Development

Interventions: Evidence-Based Approaches for Improving Teamwork. *American Psychologist, 73*(4), 517-531.

Talusan, L. (2012). Practicing Inclusion: Icebreakers and Team builders for Diversity. *The Office of Intercultural Affairs Stonehill College, 1*(1). 1-94.