

How to Use Community Building Activities (CBA'S)

What Are Community Building Activities?

They are group activities that help people relax, get comfortable, move around and become at ease with each other. They help break down psychological barriers between people. These activities can even accelerate the forming process in a group. In addition, they can introduce the point of the program to get the audience in the right frame of mind. They can also establish the facilitator's control.

Levels of Risk

1. Low - Non-threatening, low risk activities that do not invade personal space (no contact or touching) and are not too physically strenuous (but still move the group around); information shared is basic.

2. Intermediate - Participants feel more comfortable within the group; added risk includes a moderate level of physical activity and revealing some personal information.

3. High - Participants are visibly more comfortable by their body language and movement within the group; leaders can add a little more risk to the activity (i.e., getting to know one another better, higher level of physical activity).

When to Use Community Building Activities?

They can be used at anytime - but need to be appropriate for the level of the group and the available time. For example, you don't want to do a Name Game if everyone already knows each others' names. CBAs are useful when:

- You are bringing a group of people together for the first time
- A group needs to take a break because they are feeling frustrated, tense, or need to relax
- You all come back after a long break or meal
- The group hasn't been together for a great length of time
- You want to warm up the group before they begin a new task or segment of the program.

How to Conduct Community Building Activities?

Most CBAs have directions. Be sure to read them over in advance so you become familiar with the directions. Also try to visualize the group doing it to see if you want to add something or modify the activity. CBA handouts may include:

- *Goals/Objectives* - Will help determine the level of the activity
- *Procedures/Directions* - Sometimes several variations of the same activity may be provided, making it easier to choose one for your specific needs
- *Materials needed*
- *Length of time required for the activity*
- *Minimum/maximum number of participants*
- *Discussion Points or Processing* - Debriefing the experience or ending the activity

Processing or Debriefing

Some CBAs may need to be processed or debriefed to discuss issues that have been raised; this may be the case in some Level 3 icebreakers. An effective way to achieve understanding is through a discussion of the participants' feelings, concerns, strengths, limitations, or any other way that helps the group learn more about each other.

Safety and Comfort

As with any activity, the safety and comfort of the participants is a great concern. When conducting a program in which you will be using CBAs, keep the following in mind:

- **Location/Space** - Is there enough space for the activity or for participants to move around? Is the location appropriate for the activity (indoors/outdoors; clean/dirty)? Is the area clear of hazards, clutter, sharp or pointed objects, or furniture? Will lighting fixtures, doorways, windows or walls be a safety factor? Will your activity be disruptive to the surrounding groups or spaces?
- **Temperature** - Is the temperature appropriate for the activity?
- **Lighting** - Is there enough light for the activity?
- **Materials used** - Are materials clean? Safe? Appropriate for the activity?
- **Comfort of participants** - Are participants dressed properly for the activity? Will everyone feel comfortable participating (i.e., How physical are activities? How much personal information are they expected to reveal?)?
- **Time** - Will you be able to fully complete an activity with your group? Will an interruption negatively impact the group?

List of Suggested CBAs

Two Truths and a Lie

props required: none

risk level: low

A classic get-to-know-you icebreaker in which each person says two truths and one lie. The goal is to figure out which statement is the lie.

My Good Neighbor

props required: none

risk level: low-intermediate

Have players stand in a circle and choose one to stand in the middle. The person in the middle reveals something true about themselves. If any players in the circle believe this statement applies to them as well, they have to get up and find a different seat. At the same time, the person in the middle also tries to find a seat. Whoever is left without a seat is the next person to stand in the center and say something about themselves.

Link Tag

props required: none

risk level: high

Have all but two players get into pairs and link arms. One of the people not in a pair is "it" and must chase the other unpaired player. The player being chased randomly links arms with a member of one of the pairs. After this happens, the person on the other end of the link must detach themselves and is now the person being chased. The game continues until the facilitator calls a stop.

Animal/Adjective Game

props required: none

risk level: low

Have everyone choose an animal or adjective that starts with the same letter as their first name (ie. Massive Mark, Hungry Henry, Tiny Tina etc.) and have everyone refer to each other by that nickname. This is meant to be a quick name game.

Variation: Have each person explain their selection. Or have each person recite the name and associated adjective of everyone who spoke before them... Just don't be last!

Mingle Mingle**props required:** none**risk level:** high

Have everyone stand in a group together. When the facilitator says “mingle”, everyone walks around and between the other players. The facilitator then calls out a number (ex. “5!”) and the players must as quickly as possible link arms until they have achieved a group of the stated number. Anyone who fails to make a group the size of the number called is out. The game progresses until only two people are left, who are the winners.

Variation: As people are mingling, have them make eye contact with others in the group and each say their names before moving on to the next person.

Telephone Charades**props required:** none**risk level:** intermediate

Have players stand or sit in a line. One person is given a movie and acts it out to the next person in the line, while everyone else is turned around. Once the person sees the motion, they tap the next person in line on the shoulder and show him/her the same motions. The process continues until the end of the line where the last person tries to guess which movie is being acted out.

Variation: To make it a competition, two or more lines can be formed and the same movie is given to each line, the first person at the end of a line to guess the movie correctly is the winner.

Bowl of Jello**props required:** none**risk level:** intermediate

Have the group stand in a circle with one person who is “it” in the middle. The person who is it then randomly points at a person in the circle and yells either “Bowl of Jello!”, “Fighter Pilot!”, or “Mosquito!” and then counts backwards from 5 to 1. If “Bowl of Jello!” is called, the person pointed to must put their arms straight over their head and wiggle like jello while the person on either side puts their arms around the person in the middle forming a “bowl”. If “fighter pilot!” is called, then the person in the middle makes an “ok” symbol with each hand and puts them upside down over their eyes while the people on the edges point their arms upwards and away from the fighter pilot, making the “wings”. If “Mosquito!” is called, the person in the middle takes the middle finger of one hand and puts it through the index and middle finger of the other hand which they then place of their nose to make the mouth. The people on either side stand with their backs to the middle person and make a buzzing sound while flapping their arms like tiny wings. If either one of the three people are not performing the correct action by the time the person who is “it” counts to 1, the middle person of the trio is now “it”.

Variation: More than one person can be “it”, additional items can be added to increase the difficulty.

Rock Paper Scissors Tag**props required:** markers (cones, sweatshirts, etc.) for the ends of the course.**risk level:** high

Create a course about 100 ft long with a safety zone at each end. Split the group up into two teams, each team then collectively decides to pick rock, paper, or scissors. The teams then line up along the middle of the course and play rock paper scissors. On “shoot” the teams simultaneously reveal their decision to each other. The winner must then chase down and tag members of the losing team before they can flee to their safe zone. Anyone tagged then joins the winning team and the process repeats until everybody is on one team.

M&M/ Skittles Game**props required:** 1 bag of skittles or M&M’s**risk level:** low

Pass around a bag of Skittles or M&M’s and tell everyone to take as much as they want.

Once everyone has some, announce that each person must tell the group a fact about themselves for each color they have.

Variation: Create predetermined categories for colors.

Ultimate Ninja**props required:** none**risk level:** intermediate

Each person stands together with a hand in the center. Everyone yells “Uuuuuuuultimate Ninja!” and jumps backwards, striking a ninja pose. One person then makes a fluid chopping motion with their hand (sword) towards the hand of another person. If a person is attacked, they then make a motion with their arms to attempt to dodge the attack. If the attacker hits the defenders hand, then that hand is out and the player plays the rest of the game with it behind their back. If both hands are hit, then that person is out. Play revolves clockwise with each person making one attack to anyone in the group. The game continues until only one person remains, who is the winner.

Note** It is important to remember initial turn order of the attacks as players may trade places over time.

Blanket Game**props required:** 1 large blanket**risk level:** intermediate

Divide the group into two teams. Each team sits on one side of the blanket which is held up like a big screen between the two teams. one person from each team is elected to sit directly in front of the blanket. When the blanket is dropped the first person to shout the other person’s name wins, and the person who lost goes over to the winning team. The game continues until everyone is on one team.

Zip Zip Bong**props required:** none**risk level:** intermediate-high

Have the group sit in a circle with their lips over their teeth, the facilitator then says either “Zip zip!” To the person to the right of them or “BONG!” to the person to the left, all while keeping their teeth covered with their lips. The noise is then passed on with each person either saying “zip zip!” or “BONG!” to their right or left respectively. If anyone shows their teeth (ie. Laughs) they are out.

Note** The secret to this game is to make the silliest sound and face possible in order to induce the most laughter possible.

Bushla**props required:** none**risk level:** intermediate

Have the group sit in a circle. The facilitator then touches either their right or left shoulder and says “psssh”. The motion is then repeated in the direction that was indicated as quickly as possible with each successive person saying “pssh” and passing the motion either left or right. If a person takes more than a second to say the correct word, says the incorrect word, or goes out of turn, then that person says “bushla!” instead of “pssh”. If a person messes up again, they have to exclaim! “KUNG POW!” instead of saying “bushla!” if a person messes up a third time, they are out. The game goes until the facilitator stops it.