

# Part - 7

**ENERGISERS**

## **ENERGISERS**

The Effective training must begin with solid content that meets a specific need of the participants. The steak and the sizzle are both important. One way to think of this is starting with the right raw material. Once content has been determined, it is important to identify any material that is complex, dry or tedious. Find a creative way to present this information and it will be easier for participants to master it. In other words, add the spice.

Some facilitators dismiss energisers as time wasters - frivolous fluff that distracts participants and gets in the way of learning. They question the value of fun in training. One thing is certain, it is difficult for participants to learn anything if they are falling asleep. Some material is so difficult to master that participants have been known to burst into tears. By creating vivid and memorable learning experiences that actively involve participants, you can cover more content in less time and with less frustration. Looking for ideas?

During training, it can be a challenge for participants to stay alert and energised for the entire session. During the hour just before lunch, even the most enthusiastic participants find it tempting to "nod off". After lunch, lunch bag let down is common. The 3:00 doldrums have been known to plague most training sessions. There are many steps that facilitator's can take to counteract these challenges and keep sessions lively and fun.

### **An Ounce of Prevention**

The first step in dealing with energy slumps is to prevent them. Instead of the usual introductions, kick off your sessions with a ten-minute activity that gets participants on their feet right away:

Keep your introduction short (ten minutes maximum) and then get participants on their feet to toss around a ball as they introduce themselves or their partner.

Often, it appears that there is no way around presenting some theoretical information early in the session. If this is the case, keep it lively, short (20 - 25 minutes) and interactive.

### **Break Time**

Participants will appreciate a 5-minute break to take tea or pop into the washroom no later than an hour into the session. During the break play some upbeat music. Let them know that there will be another break in about 45 minutes and encourage them to get up and stretch or take water or teas at any time.

As soon as possible after the first break, try to get participants involved in a paired or group activity. An exercise that gets participants on their feet working at a flip chart is ideal.

By 11:00 participants will definitely be ready for another break. Keep it to 10 minutes and make the last half of it active. Getting the group up to do the an energiser at this time will perk up even the most drowsy participants.

### **The Danger Zone**

The last hour before lunch can be brutal. When participants are about to return to their seats, move them around so that they have a chance to network with different individuals. Put some logo on the table and encourage participants to build as they work. To encourage them to colour and doodle, announce a prize for the person who has the most colourful workbook (or name tag) by the end of the day.

Keep the last hour before lunch very active and interactive. Avoid showing videos and other passive activities during this time. If there is a need for skill practice or a hands-on session, this would be a good time to build it into the schedule.

### **Lunch Bag Let Down**

To avoid the energy slump that often follows a meal, keep the hour immediately after lunch interactive and then take a 5 minute short break. Bringing in cool drinks at this time is very refreshing. Apart from *Qihwa* (Green Tea), experiment with unusual pick-me-ups such as lemonade, if affordable.

At the end of the break, put some colourful lunch bags filled with energisers on the table. Encourage participants to fiddle with them for the rest of the session.

### **So Long to Siesta**

By 3:00, participants will welcome a play break complete with yo-yos and Frisbees or vacation get-away via video.

### **Finishing Touches**

At 4:00, play some lively music. Get participants up on their feet for a 3 minute workout. Then, ask them to line up, grab the shoulder of the person in front of them while they give and receive a vigorous massage

The last hour of the day should be an interactive session. This would be an ideal time for skill practice or small group exercises.

Instead of the usual approach to review at the end of the day (flipping overheads while everyone goes to sleep) ask participants to re-cap what they learned and present it in a creative way such as charades, commercials and improvisation.

One thing is certain, with the energisers, your training sessions will never be the same and your participants are sure to come back for more.

The following Energisers are intended to be quick and fun activities that get people moving, laughing, and at ease. They are ideal for the very outset of a

training, meeting or whenever things are beginning to drag. They are also useful to use when coming off a break to help folks re-focus their attention on the group and away from whatever it was they were occupying themselves with during the break. Several such activities are described below (listed in alphabetical order).

### **1. All My Neighbours #1**

You need an odd number of people for this game that is a distant cousin to musical chairs.

Everyone begins by sitting on chairs in a circle with the facilitator standing in the middle. Explain that the person in the middle needs to find some "neighbours." To do so, they'll make a true statement about themselves and hope that it will be true for others. Everyone that "identifies" with the statement has to then stand up and find an empty chair. The person in the centre is also looking for a chair, so once again someone will be without a chair, and they get to go to the middle and find some "neighbours."

The facilitator then begins with something like: "All my neighbours wearing blue jeans." At this, everyone who is wearing jeans should jump out of their seats and look for an empty seat. The odd person out goes to the middle

This game can easily last ten to fifteen minutes.

### **2. All My Neighbours #2 (for more "sedate" groups)**

The group is in a circle, standing up. The facilitator is standing in the middle of the circle. Explain that you are going to make a variety of statements and you'd like everyone who "identifies" with the statement to join you in the centre of the circle for "high fives."

The facilitator then begins: "All my neighbours wearing white socks." At this, everyone who is wearing white socks should join the facilitator in the middle of the circle for a high five. Folks then return to their seats.

The facilitator then goes on through 10 to 15 other such statements. Example can include:

All my neighbours who:

- are wearing belts
- have an older sibling
- were born in a month without an R in it
- whose last digit of their social security number is odd
- haven't been caught speeding in a year
- like Frosted Flakes
- don't eat meat
- were engaged to be married more than once
- remember the name of Yogi Bear's sidekick

have watched Gone With the Wind in one sitting  
know how to tie a bow tie  
play the piano (even a little bit)  
have been to a Grateful Dead concert  
have voted with an absentee ballot

Figure on ten minutes tops for this activity.

### **3. Blob Tag**

Its helpful to have a pretty large, open space for this energiser. The facilitator is it. When she or he tags someone they lock arms and then jointly attempt to tag someone else. As each person is tagged, they lock arms with those who are already it. The game is over when the last person is "captured." Some boundaries must be set up for this activity to keep folks from roaming too far afield. This game typically takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

### **4. Honey I Love You**

In this game, suitable for all men or all women participants, everyone is sitting in a circle. As the facilitator, you will normally go first. The object is to identify someone in the circle, go up to them, and say "Honey, I love you, but I just can't make you laugh" with the express purpose of making them laugh. The person you are saying this to, has to look at you and work at keeping a straight face. If after three tries at getting them to laugh you have not succeeded, pick another target. If they laugh or even smile they move into the middle of the circle and select a target. You can do just about anything to get someone to laugh except touch them. Funny faces, strange voices, props, etc. are all fair game.

Once a person has been made to laugh, they can no longer be a target. The game goes on until the last person both breaks down and laughs or withstands the final three attempts at getting them to laugh. Note that depending on the size of the group and the ability of folks to keep a poker face, this is often not a quick game. Nevertheless, its always a lot of fun.

### **5. Hospital Tag**

In this activity, everyone is "it". The objective is to keep from being "tagged" by another player, but to tag as many other people as possible. The first time you are tagged you have to put a hand on where you were tagged -- for instance, if you are tagged on the top of the head you then have to play with one hand on top of your head. You can then resume attempting to tag others. The next time you are tagged you have to put your other hand where you are tagged that time. The third time you are tagged you are dead (sit down to signify this) and can no longer attempt to tag other people.

It helps to have a fairly large, open space for this activity, but it normally helps to set up some boundaries to keep folks from roaming too far afield. Depending on people's creative "tagging" abilities this can get pretty

interesting. It shouldn't take more than ten minutes for this energiser to run its course.

## **6. Person-to-Person**

There has to be an odd number of people for this activity to work. The facilitator stands in the midst of the group and asks everyone else to pick a partner. Explain that you'll give them from two to five commands that they must perform as a pair. The last command is always "Person-to-person" and everyone, including the person giving the commands, will have to scramble to find a new partner. The odd person out gets to go into the middle of the group and provide the next set of commands.

The game begins with the person in the centre (initially the facilitator) giving instructions such as: "Elbow to elbow" and the pairs must put an elbow to elbow. The facilitator can then say: "Ear to ear" and the pairs then have to put an ear to an ear, as well as keeping the elbow to elbow. Then the facilitator says "Person-to-person," everyone finds a new partner, and you go on to the next person calling out commands. Depending on the group, this can get interesting!

Stop the game when you feel like it.

## **7. Secret Agent**

In this game its best to have a pretty good sized, open area. Have folks begin by standing around in a circle. Tell them that there is someone in the group out to get them -- a "secret agent" -- and only you know who they are. Each individual also has a "bodyguard" whom only they know about.

Then, quietly, without pointing, and without telling anyone, each individual identifies to himself or herself who their "secret agent" is for this game. After everyone seems to have made a selection, have them then select another individual -- quietly, without pointing, and without telling anyone -- who will serve as their "bodyguard" for the activity.

After everyone has made their selections let them know that they are now free to move around, but they must keep their "bodyguard" between themselves and their "secret agent" at all times. This can get pretty funny and interesting as people move about. It often turns into utter chaos because of the odd combinations of "bodyguards" and "secret agents."

Stop the game when you feel like its over.

## **8. Take Off From "...And The Cheese Stands Alone"**

This exercise should have a very skilled facilitator - emotions can run high. Works well with co-workers who know each other well.

Have everyone stand in a circle. Ask a series of questions. Start out with simple, common questions, e.g. all who like red enter into the middle. Build up to tough questions: All vegetarians in the middle. All white people in the middle. All Urdu speaking people, etc.

The facilitator needs to recognise that these are risky areas but the point is to give people a chance to see what it is like to be alone or to be on the outside

### **9. "Alphabet Search"**

Divide audience into small groups. Search your person for objects that you have on you ranging from A-Z. Place items in buckets. First group or person (if done individually) to get all 26 letters represented wins. Exercise can explore how diverse we are - insight into our individual selves. If done as a small group lends itself well to a small team building exercise as the group works together through the alphabet.

### **10. Diversity**

Play small snippets from various musical pieces and various types of music (e.g. classical to hard rock). Get the audience's reaction to the different works.

### **11. The 4 C's**

Insight into various personalities - Name a cartoon character, color, car, and writer that best describes your personality and tell us why.

### **12. Who's Here?**

This is a very popular introductory exercise. Use it in the beginning of a workshop as a warm-up to talking about identity, diversity, inclusiveness.

If it works, this exercise will elicit feelings from group members related to personal identity and acceptance, experiences of bias and discrimination, desire for connection without compromising integrity, etc. Facilitators should be prepared to deal with such feelings.

Goals:

1) To orient the participants to thinking about identity and identity group membership (I am \_\_\_\_\_," and "I am a member of/I belong to the group \_\_\_\_\_.")

2) To make explicit the diversity of the group

3) To get participants thinking about the feelings attached to

(a) belonging to a group

(b) not belonging to a group

4) To help facilitators identify which identity groups are present

5) To help facilitators assess how receptive the group and individuals are to thinking about identity and/or difference (comfort level of the group)

**Objectives:**

Participants will be able to:

- identify the identity groups they belong to
- identify the identity groups present in the room
- talk about feelings attached to identity group membership (or non-membership)
- talk about themselves and others in terms of identity groups.

**Description:**

Ask participants to stand in a circle.

Tell them that you are going to read a list of questions about their identities.

Ask participants to move to the center of the circle when they hear a phrase that describes themselves.

Ask them to pay attention to the feelings they have when they hear certain descriptions, when they stand, when they don't stand, when others stand or don't stand. They should notice their feelings and each other when they are inside and outside groups.

Remind them that some identities are risky to claim in certain settings. (For example, it would be dangerous to identify as Jewish in Nazi Germany.) Participants may elect to "pass" and remain in the outside of the circle.

(Example: who here is over 30? Those over 30 should move into the middle; those under 30 or who choose to pass should stay put.)

**Sample List Of Descriptions:**

Generic: "Who here...

...is the oldest child?

...is the youngest child?

...is a middle child?

...is an only child?

...has more than three siblings?

...has more than five siblings?

...comes from a blended family (i.e. has step-sisters and/or step-brothers)?

...was raised by a single parent for most of their life?  
...was raised by two parents?  
...has a divorce in their family history?  
...comes from/grew up in the suburbs?  
...comes from/grew up in an urban area?  
...comes from/grew up in a rural area?  
...has a dog?  
...has a cat?  
...has horses?  
...has other animals (name)?  
...likes sports?  
...likes movies?  
(You can make up your own along these lines.)

Ism-related: "Who here...

...is a man?  
...is a woman?  
...considers themselves middle-class?  
...considers themselves working-class?  
...considers themselves economically poor?  
...is non-Muslim?  
...is Christian or raised Christian?  
...is of another religious background?  
...is a person of colour?  
...does not speak English as their first or native language?  
(You can make up more along these lines.)

**Process:**

Process the exercise by asking participants to discuss the feelings associated with group membership or non membership.

How did they feel identifying themselves as members of these groups?  
Did anyone not stand up even though they were a member of that group?  
Was anyone confused?  
What description felt proudest? Scariest?  
Did any description make you feel ashamed?  
Other questions?