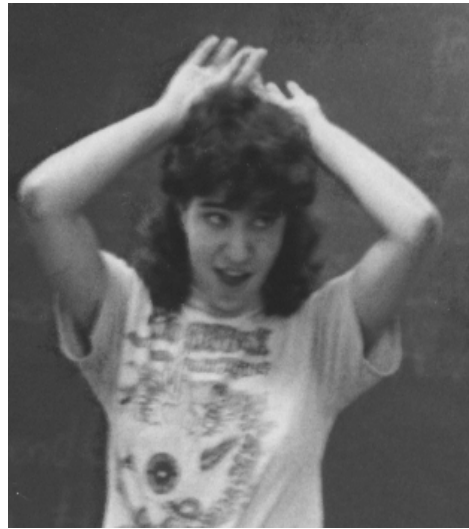


deep fun

**a compendium
of YRUU games
edited by Sienna Baskin**



Introduction

~by Sienna Baskin

As Young Religious Unitarian Universalists, we develop our own culture. Games have always been an important part of that culture. We play games in youth group meetings, at conferences, during worships, or to break up a business plenary session. Although games are a wonderful way to socialize, they can also fulfill other goals of successful YRUU programming. They can be a vehicle for learning, leadership, worship, and even social action. Games remind us that the spirit of fun can permeate everything we do, and that fun can be full of meaning.

In the course of Unitarian Universalist Youth history, many games have endeared themselves to all our hearts. Games like Silent Football, Wink, and All My Friends and Neighbors have become legendary in YRUU circles all over the continent. They generate some of our fondest and silliest memories. More serious “games,” like the Angel Wash and the Power Shuffle are used in worships and have a loyal following. Their rules are passed from district to district and from YRUU generation to generation. This book will document these games so they will not be forgotten by future YRUUers. It will be distributed continentally, so that new or remote youth groups will have immediate access to the games the rest of us know and love. We have collected these games from our own memories and those of our friends, and from games discussions on the YRUU email list-serve. We have refined their descriptions using many books and resources, including books by the Raccoon Institute and Learned Enterprises, *The New Games Book*, and an LRY programs packet by Bev Hendricks. Many of these games have rules or names that vary from district to district. This book does not, by any means, contain the “right” version of any game, only the one that has found its way to us and that we have used successfully. We encourage you to make these games your own by adapting them to the size, needs, and tastes of your group.

To make this book more user-friendly for youth and advisors, we decided to organize the games into five chapters, loosely based on Denny Rydberg’s “Five Steps to Building Community.” Introducing new games to your youth group or conference will work best if your timing is right--if you choose games that fit the level of community already attained and nudge the group on to the next level. Following this introduction is an outline of the “Five Steps.” We have relied on this system to explain how community develops in YRUU settings at continental trainings, and we consider it whenever we plan programming for a YRUU event. Before each chapter are a few hints and suggestions for planning youth programming for that particular stage. In the game descriptions themselves, we tried to alternate between masculine and feminine pronouns, in order to be grammatically and politically correct. Don’t let it confuse you!

This book is a stockpile of ideas; the rest is up to you. Anyone who has ever had a flash of inspiration, stood up and tried to explain a game to a group of

excited, noisy, and energetic YRUUers can tell you, teaching and learning games with each other is half the fun.

Since ours is a living tradition, and new games are being introduced all the time, this book will be a first edition of many. We will continue to revise and add to it in the future. If your favorite game did not make it in, or if you and your friends have invented a new game, send us a description and soon the whole continent may be playing it! Send any correspondence to:

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FIVE STEPS TO BUILDING COMMUNITY

Adapted by Jennifer Martin and Galen Moore from Building Community in Youth Groups by Denny Rydberg

Step One: Bonding

The first step in building community is to break down the cliques and barriers that exist, and to establish a relationship of trust among the individuals in the group. A problem-solving task or other activity that requires group members to work side by side can create communal bonds. As they discuss solutions and help one another accomplish the goal, group members transcend their diverse backgrounds. Cooperation is the goal. As each person's input is accepted and welcomed by others, they begin to identify themselves as part of the team.

Step Two: Opening Up

When an individual can share non-threatening areas of her or his life, an exciting step in group building has taken place. If one person perceives that another is genuinely interested in her or his story, then trust will develop between the two. Unfortunately, the reverse is also true. If a person perceives that others do not care enough to listen, trust, the foundation of community, will not be established. The more sympathetically a group listens, the more secure an individual feels as a member of a group.

The exercises done in this step should be flexible, so that people can share to whatever degree they feel comfortable. Participants go away from these activities enthusiastic about the deepening friendships they are developing in their group. They realize that their personal imperfections, and struggles are shared by the group. Individuals discover that their uniqueness is not strange but wonderful and the group accepts and loves them.

Step Three: Affirming

The act of encouraging each other through affirmation is crucial to the growing process of a group. When a young man's peers compliment him, he feels more confident in himself in relation to the group and can share deeper feelings. When friends tell a young woman that they appreciate her, she realizes that she is worthy of love and praise. Many reclusive youth become active members of the group when they realize others care about them. Participants in affirming interactions leave feeling *warm and fuzzy* about the group and themselves. This feeling is especially crucial at this stage of the community building process. After *Opening Up*, people need positive feedback before they will consider sharing further. It is important to remember that adult leaders and advisors are an integral

part of the community building process and they need affirmation just like everyone else.

Step Four: Stretching

Difficult situations naturally arise if the group is together long enough. These include problems that arise in group members' lives like divorce, illness, drug abuse; or those that affect the group directly like division of the church, rules violation, cliques at conferences. These situations are opportunities for stretching. However, since many youth groups are together for only a short period you may not want to wait for a stretching experience to surface on its own. It is sometimes necessary to initiate one.

Stretching exercises reap many benefits. When people move beyond their normal comfort level they experience the greatest potential for growth. Group members facing struggles together must actively care for each other. Individuals cannot merely say they care for each other in a stretching exercise; they must actively show it. They must create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable enough to expose their imperfections to the group. For example, if the group plans a trip to the hospital to visit terminally ill children, a popular member who appears to have his life together might admit his apprehensions about talking one-on-one with those less fortunate than he. When he sees that the group still likes him, he realizes that his facade of perfection is unnecessary. And when self-critical members of the group discover that even seemingly perfect people have struggles, they will be less hard on themselves.

Through a simple stretching exercise, individuals also realize they can achieve much more as a group than they could as a collection of individuals. They realize the importance of each member to the entire group. Facing and overcoming programmed difficulties give young people the confidence that they can cope with the everyday problems they face. They learn that they can accomplish more than they thought possible, if they believe in themselves.

Step Five: Deeper Sharing & Goal Setting

At this stage, individuals share deeply with one another and set goals. The youth group becomes a setting where young people can express their visions of the future and present struggles. The group will not laugh at or condemn its members if they admit they flunked a test, or that they dream of becoming a US senator, or that they have a drinking problem.

When a group member shares a problem, the rest of the group gives support and encouragement by expressing sympathy. The group can help the individual talk through possible solutions and goals. The group holds the individual accountable for his or her decisions, remaining supportive throughout the process.

It is important to keep in mind that not all of a person's thoughts are appropriate to share in a group setting. A person should be discouraged from

telling the entire youth group details of her life that might hurt another member of the group. She should be encouraged to share these struggles with one another or the advisor(s) on a one to one basis, and in these conversations come up with a suitable way to bring it to the group.

Action

Taking a group through the five steps is essential to communal group, but it is only the beginning of the exercises' benefits. Once they have built a sense of community, participants will be ready to risk sharing with their peers in a non-programmed way. They will also be ready to set and accomplish other goals with a united effort.



Step One: Bond Building



The bonding stage is the ideal time to teach, learn and play new games. In fact, bonding almost requires games, or at least some kind of structured social activity. Most group, non-competitive games learned outside of YRUU are conducive to bonding.

The first step in building community is to break down the cliques and barriers that exist, and to establish a relationship of trust among the individuals in the group. Bonding Games accomplish their goal best when the whole group plays together. This is the time for the generating of collective energy, not for intimacy. Keep everyone in one place and keep them busy, so that old friends will not be tempted to be exclusive with each other. If you are successful, newcomers will feel welcome and accepted, and will start to perceive how they fit into the group.

A problem-solving task or other activity that requires group members to work side by side can create communal bonds. Cooperation is the goal We have

broken the Bonding Games into three sections, Mingling Games, Making/Cooperating Games, and Active Games. This is the time to learn everyone's name and some of their identifying characteristics of everyone in the group, but not to delve much deeper. First, the group needs the experience of playing together. Group art projects are also well-suited to this stage, but remember, the process is often more important than the result. Working together, to cook a meal or collect cans for a food drive can also strengthen group bonds. If the group's energy requires more jumping around, active YRUU sports are great bonding games as well. *As each person's input is accepted and welcomed by others, they begin to identify themselves as part of the team.*

Mingling Games

Syllable Clap:

Parameters: 40 to 60 people

Have each member of the group clap out a beat corresponding to the number of syllables in their first name. Marc claps once. Alison claps three times. Then have people with the same number of syllables in their names find each other without speaking, by walking around the room clapping out their names. Once the group is divided into subgroups, have them introduce themselves to each other and then to the rest of the group.

Variation: Shake hands in a rhythm corresponding to the number of syllables in your name.

Birthdays:

Parameters: 40 to 60 people

Have the group line up according to birth date by day and month. To make it more difficult, instruct them to do it without speaking. To make it even more difficult, give them a time limit.

Variation: Have everyone get together in groups of people born in the same month. Have each group come up with a cheer for their month.

Footloose

Parameters: 40 to 60 people

Materials: Shoes on all feet

Have everyone in the group take off their left shoe and throw it into a pile in the center of the circle. Tell everyone to find a new left shoe from the pile. Once everyone is wearing a mismatched pair, tell them to find the two people wearing the shoes that match theirs. When they find them, have them stand with their feet crossed over so that right and left shoes are matched up all the way around the circle. With a little maneuvering, the group should be able to form one circle.

Shoe Store

Parameters: 40 to 60 people

Count off by two's. Have all the "one's" exit the room, and explain to them privately what they are to do when they re-enter. Have all "two's" take off their shoes and put them in the center of the room. One's return, and each "one" finds a matching pair of shoes, finds the "two" who owns the pair and put them on her feet, all without speaking.

Hog Call:

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Have the group split up into pairs and come up with a matching set of words or sounds (i.e. "hic-cup," "peanut-butter," or "honey-bee"). Have each person choose one of the words as their own. Then have each person announce their word to the group, so that there are no repeats. Then instruct the group to close their eyes and start milling around the space with the goal of getting as far away from their partner as possible. Once the pairs are well-separated, announce that they are to find their partners without opening their eyes, by shouting their word. (If all goes well, Peanut will meet up with Butter).

Ha Ha

Parameters: five to 40 people

Make a chain of bodies by having each person lie on the next person's belly. Have the person on one end of the chain start by saying "HA!" When the next person feels his head rise and fall with the force of the exhalation, it is his turn to say, "Ha, HA!" Continue adding "Ha's" proceeding down the chain, doing your best to not break into spontaneous laughter. If anyone mis-counts their "Ha's," return to the beginning of the chain. Play until everyone is laughing freely.

Name Train:

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Have the group stand in a circle. You, or the leader you choose for this game, are the train's engine. Begin by chug-chugging into the circle and hooting like a steam whistle. Stop in front of someone you don't know and introduce yourself. When she tells you her name break into a cheer, chanting the person's name three times. After the cheer, this person becomes the first car of your train and follows behind as you chug and hoot on to the next person. Every time another player is introduced the new person's name is repeated down each car of the line, then the entire train breaks into the three times cheer. Continue adding cars to the train, splitting off to form new trains if necessary, until everyone has found their way into a train.

Spill the Basket

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: enough chairs for all members of the group minus one, and no more.

Also known as, "All my friends and neighbors," "The chair game," "I like people who..."

Have the group sit in a circle of chairs. "It," who doesn't have a chair, goes to the center and picks something about themselves she might have in common with other

members of the group. She says something like, "I like people who...have ever dyed their hair a color of the rainbow." Everyone to whom this applies must jump out of their chairs and find another chair (not either of the chairs next to them), a la musical chairs. The person remaining after all the chairs are taken makes the next statement, "I like people who... are at their first conference." For added madness: seated members can make eye-contact with each other across the circle and switch seats before "It" has made her statement. If "It" perceives this happening, she can quickly try to steal a vacant seat, leaving a new "It" in the center.

Variation: Choose slightly more meaningful categories, and everyone to whom they apply comes to the center of the circle, holds hands, and gives themselves a cheer before they rush to find another seat.

Honey, if you love me

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Sit in a circle. One person begins by sitting on the lap of the person next to him. He says "Honey, if you love me, won't you please, please smile?" and attempts to make her smile with his beguiling ways. If she manages to keep a straight face and respond, "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile," he must move on to his next victim. Whomever he can successfully cause to smile then makes her rounds of the laps, and he sits in her place. **Variation:** Omit the lap-sitting and play without any physical contact. This is more challenging and a safer option for a new group.

Teapot

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Choose a person to leave of the room. The remaining group chooses a verb. When the person returns to the room, the group must replace that verb with "teapot," or another chosen word, when they speak. The person tries to discover the meaning of "teapot" by asking members of the group questions like, "Do you teapot a lot?" or, "What does it feel like to teapot?" Whoever reveals the verb in her answer to the question gets to be the next person to leave the room.

Spot

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: a tube of toothpaste

Sit in a circle. Everyone is renamed Harry. One person turns to the person next to them and starts the dialogue, which is as follows:

#1: "Hello Harry,"

#2: "Yes Harry,"

#1: (referring to #3) "Tell Harry,"

#2: "Thank you, Harry."

Then 2 becomes 1 and 3 becomes 2 and the dialogue starts over. When someone messes up the dialogue, they get a spot of toothpaste on their face and their name becomes "One Spot" instead of Harry. Once they reach five spots they become "Super Spot," and after six spots they owe the rest of the players one dare. When

the group is finished playing the game they can dream up something silly and mildly humiliating for him to do.

Fruit-Basket

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Have the group sit in a large circle on the floor. Tell them each to pick a fruit (**Variation:** choose any category) and go around the circle once, each person calling out the fruit they have chosen. "It" goes to the center of the circle and picks another person by saying "Kiwi (that person's fruit), who do you love?" "Kiwi" picks another person by saying, "Kiwi loves Plum." "It" has to remember who "Plum" is and run over to him before he can say "Plum loves Guava." If he succeeds in touching someone before they can say who they love and redirect his course, that person becomes it.

Variation: "The Pillow Game" uses a pillow or scarf to do the tagging. One additional rule: no throwing the pillow.

Variation: This version is done with sign-language and in complete silence (except, of course, for shrieks and giggles). Have each person to choose a physical gesture to represent themselves. Instead of saying "Kiwi loves Plum," the person who starts it out demonstrates their sign, then the sign for love (crossed arms over the chest with hands in fists), then someone else's sign.

Making/Cooperating

Mural or Collage

Parameters: perfect for a group from 2 to infinity!

Materials: Every kind of art supply you can rustle up.

Here is a great way to decorate your youth group or conference space while bonding. Put out the magazines, paints, pencils, paper, scissors and glue, put on some good music (not too loud, so that people can talk), and go for it. Encourage people to make their corner of the project their own, but to interact with and respond to what others are doing.

Variation: Create your art in silence.

Variation: Offer a topic for the art like "Going home" or "Breaking down the Walls."

Electricity

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Also known as "Pass the Squeeze."

Everyone sits or stands in a circle, holding hands. One person squeezes the hand of the person to her right, who squeezes the hand of the person to his right, and the squeeze is "passed" around the circle until it returns to its starting place. Try this game with your eyes closed, or with multiple squeezes in different directions.

Tug of Friendship:

Parameters: 40 to 60 people

Materials: a thick rope--25 feet or longer depending on the size of the group

Have the group sit in a circle. Tie the rope together to make a large loop, slightly smaller than the circle of people. Place the rope inside the circle in front of their feet, and have everyone hold on. Tell them that the goal is to get everybody to a standing position by pulling on the rope, and without touching the floor with their hands.

Variation: Try this exercise in a traditional tug of war formation.

Variation: “The Yurt Circle.” Start standing in a tight circle. Hold onto the rope (or each other’s hands) and lean out. Notice how each individual affects the whole group’s effort.

Group Knot

Parameters: five to 10 people

Stand in a circle. Everyone puts their hands in the center and grabs hold of two different people’s hands. Try to untangle the knot into one or two circles without letting go of one another’s hands.

Variation: Divide into teams and have a race.

Variation: Try it in silence.

As a Rule

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Everyone sits on the floor in a circle, one person selected to be “It” leaves the room. The players remaining in the room choose a rule to use while answering questions. Examples: Answer questions as if you were the person to your right; all boys lie and all girls tell the truth. “It” comes back into the room and tries to guess the rule by asking players questions about themselves. If the guessing takes too long, participants can exaggerate their responses.

Whert

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

“It” leaves the room. The remaining group chooses a leader and sits down in a circle. “It” returns and sits in the circle. The leader will decide on a repetitive motion for the entire group to make. When the leader changes motions, everyone must follow suit. “It” tries to guess who the leader is. The leader keeps changing her motions and the group keeps following, but the group must try to deceive the person guessing by watching anyone but the leader to find out the next motion. When the leader is found out, she must leave the room and the group chooses a new leader.

Dragon Fight

Parameters: 15 to 40 people and a large outdoor space

Divide the group into two teams. Each team forms a “dragon” by lining up and holding onto one another’s waists. Each dragon’s “head” must try to catch the other dragon’s “tail” without letting the body break apart. The gait, voice and personality of the dragons are up to the members of the teams.

MAFIA

Parameters: eight to 15 people

Materials: index cards for each member

The leader of this game orchestrates and does not participate. She writes an identity on an index card for each member of the group. Two of the cards should say "Mafia," one should say "Informant," and the rest should say "Civilian." Have the group sit in a circle. The leader distributes cards, instructing everyone to read in secret. Then the leader says, "It is nighttime, everyone go to sleep." Everyone closes their eyes. The leader says, "Mafia, wake up." Those with "Mafia" written on their cards open their eyes. They must agree, without speaking, to kill one of the civilians. They point to this person, and the leader makes a mental note. Then she says, "Mafia go to sleep, Informant, wake up." The two Mafia close their eyes and he who has "Informant" written on his card opens his eyes. He selects one person to know more about, by pointing. If that person is Mafia, the leader nods, if a Civilian, she shakes her head.

Then the leader says, "It is daytime, everybody wake up." Everyone opens their eyes and the leader tells them who was killed by the Mafia while they were asleep. Then the entire group comes to consensus on who they think is a member of the Mafia; who *they* should kill by pointing to them. The true Mafia should try to hide their identity by engaging in the debate. The Informant should try to use his information to protect Civilians and kill Mafia, but without revealing his identity as the Informant (or risking his own life for the next night of Mafia prowling). Every person who comes under suspicion has a chance to defend their civilian status. When the group decides and kills, the leader informs them whether the person they killed was Mafia or Civilian. Round two begins by the leader saying, "It's nighttime..." Continue until all Civilians are dead or Mafia members are found out and killed.

Brown Bag Skits

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: Interesting clothing items or props, pillowcases, and children's books
Break the group into teams of two to five people and distribute the pillowcases among them. Have each member of each team find and bring back one unusual item (toothbrush, can opener, banana, guitar pick) and put it in the bag. Gather the bags. Redistribute the bags among the teams and give them instructions; to create a skit using all of the items. Establish whatever guidelines you want--everyone must have a line, the skit must include a certain phrase--but don't give them too much time to prepare. Bring everyone back together and have each team perform

Variation: Include a children's book or the title of a well-known fairy tale to act out in each bag.

Oobleck

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity!

Materials: cornstarch, water, food coloring, measuring cups and a large bowl
Measure out 1/4 cup of cornstarch for each person in the group. Add five tablespoons of water per 1/4 cup and mix. Add more water little by little until the concoction is malleable. Add some food coloring. This is some crazy stuff to make and play with. When you squeeze it, its dry and hard, but release it and it melts into

a puddle. Dive in! Make sculptures and watch them melt. Talk about metaphors for life. Think of new names for the stuff. Read *Bartholemew and the Oobleck* by Dr. Seuss aloud while the group is playing.

Rainstorm

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Darken the room. Have the group sit in a circle. Explain that you are going to start a repetitive motion and that it will travel around the circle to the right until it comes back to you, at which point you will start another motion. Tell the members not to change what they are doing until the person on their left has changed.

The order of the motions is:

1. rubbing hands together
2. rubbing hands on thighs
3. snapping fingers
4. clapping hands
5. stomping feet *and* clapping hands

Once you reach #5, repeat the motions in descending order. The last motion to be passed around is stillness and silence. **Variation:** This game works well in a worship if you omit the explanation and see if everyone can pick up on what is happening and follow along.

Active Games

Wink

Parameters: 15 to 41 people (an odd number), a large soft space (carpet, sand or soft grass works best)

Materials: pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks for all

This classic is classically hard to explain, and different versions are played in different districts. Here goes:

Have everyone find a partner of their approximate weight and size. One person remains partnerless and is the “winker.” Set up an area with no furniture or other obstructions. Participants remove all jewelry, shoes, and glasses. The group sits in a double circle, one partner behind another, both their butts on the floor, not touching each other, with about a foot between each pair. The “winker” does not have a partner and sits alone in the circle. The winker picks two or more potential partners from the inner circle. He chooses them by winking, pointing, calling out a description (like “everyone with white socks on”) or he may pick every person in the inner circle by saying, “Breadbasket.” Those who are picked must try to reach the winker before anyone else does, kiss him on the cheek, and thereby become his partner. However, their current partners, those on the outer circle, want to keep them from escaping by chasing down, holding on. What ensues is a very physical struggle, a combination of racing (between pairs) and wrestling (between partners). The only rules are: neither partner can rise to their feet; tickling and intentional hurting are forbidden; no physically helping or impeding the struggling pairs by other

pairs or the winker is allowed; the couples on either side of the winker cannot be called upon. When one of the chosen people reaches and kisses the winker, she gets in back of him and all struggles cease. Every pair who was called on by the winker switches back and front places. The person who has lost her partner becomes the new winker. Good luck!

Vampire

Parameters: 15 to 40 people and an enclosed, large space free of sharp objects
This will help all of you Unitarians get back to your Transylvanian roots. Choose one person to be the referee. Everyone except the referee closes his or her eyes and begins milling around the room. The referee will keep you from colliding with anything but warm, living flesh. He will also pick one person to be the vampire and whisper it in her ear. The vampire keeps her eyes closed like everyone else, but when she bumps into someone, there's a difference. She snatches him and lets out a blood-curdling scream. Then he becomes a vampire as well. He is now on the prowl, seeking new victims. Only when two vampires snatch and feast on each other by mistake do they transform themselves back into regular mortals. Continue playing until your voices are hoarse.

Stuck in the Muck

Parameters: 15 to 40 people and a large space

Materials: Orange cones

Also known as "Tunnel Tag"

Ask the group to scatter about the space. If you are not in a space with natural boundaries like a field, create some boundaries. Ask for a volunteer to be "it." When "it" manages to catch someone, then that person is stuck in the muck and can only be released by another person crawling through her legs. The goal of the person who is "it" is to move fast enough so that everyone gets stuck in the muck. To pick up the pace and relieve the exhausted "it", you can have another person join him as "it."

Red Light / Green Light

Parameters: five to 40 people

Choose one person and send her to the far end of the space. She remains stationary, turned away from the rest of the group. When she calls "Green light!", the group moves towards her. When she calls "Red light!", they have to stop. The caller turns around quickly and if she sees any members of the group still moving, those players have to return to the beginning. The goal of the game is to touch the caller without being seen moving.

Variation: Tie the group into pairs with rope and have them hop toward the caller. Try it with one of the pair closing his eyes.

Pelvis Ball

Parameters: five to 15 people

Form a standing circle. Tell the group you are going to make a ball of energy. Pluck an imaginary particle out of the air and roll it in your hands, making it larger and larger. Once you have patted it into the shape and size you want, place it squarely between your hips. Pass it to someone across the circle by winding up your hips and thrusting the imaginary ball into the air. Watch as it soars through the air and your friend catches it in her pelvis. Remind the group to think about how much the ball weighs, to experiment with sounds to compliment their pelvis action.

Sardines

Parameters: five to 15 people and a large outdoor or indoor space with plenty of places to hide.

This game is reverse hide-and-go-seek. The player who has been chosen to go first leaves the other players, who all cover their eyes for a few minutes, in search of a hiding place. He has a minute to find a space in which all of the players will be able to fit (just barely). Then all players set out in search for the missing one. Players can band together in teams or set out alone. When a player finds him, she quietly joins him in the hiding place. All players continue searching and hiding until all but one are crammed in the space. When the last player finds the rest of the group and confirms that he was the last one out, he becomes the next "it" and sets out to find a new hiding place. The sardines (those packed tightly in the first space) wait a few moments and then charge out in search of the new "it". This game is especially fun in the dark.

Balancing Act

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: two small items that can be easily balanced on the head. Rolled-up socks or chalkboard erasers are ideal.

Have the group spread out around the space and stand still. The person who is "it" puts one of the objects on her head. Another person puts the other object on his head. "It" chases him and tries to tag him. He can escape by giving the sock to one of the standing people, who then becomes the chased one. If "It" tags the person she is chasing before he can pass on the sock, the relationship is reversed.

Calvin Ball

Parameters: 15 to 40 people and a large field

Materials: a beach ball, frisbee, baseball and bat, tennis racket and ball, or whatever assorted sports equipment you can find.

This game has a few more rules than the one Calvin and Hobbies play, but it can be just as open to improvisation. Divide the group into 2 equal teams, called the Batters and the Fielders, and have each team stand in a loose circle opposite the other. Elect a referee to stop anything dangerous and to call for the teams to switch. When teams switch, the new Batters can make up new rules, but here are some to start: Fielders choose a pitcher, who can choose which item he is going to throw. Batters are up to "bat" (or catch and

throw) one at a time. When the ball is hit, the batter must run around the entire group of Batters, while the pitcher retrieves the ball and it is passed through the legs of the entire group of Fielders. The last fielder to receive the ball holds it up and yells "Stop!" to the batter. The Batters goal is to accumulate as many complete "runs" as possible.

Boomerang Fish

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: socks, beanbag, or anything that is soft and throwable to be the "fish."

"It" stands in the center of the room with the "fish," spins and lets it fly. She makes up a rule to apply whenever the fish lands in the same corner of the room in the future. Some examples: When the "fish" lands in Corner 1: Everyone pair up and piggy-back, and have a chicken-fight with everyone else. The last pair left standing gets to be "it." Corner 2: The present "it" gets to tell everyone else what to do. Corner 3: "It" closes her eyes and everyone else hides. The last person she finds gets to be "it." Corner 4: "It" relinquishes her "it-dom" to the person of her choice. Center: The first person to grab the "fish" gets to be it. As the rules are created by successive "its," everyone has to memorize and follow them.

Rattler

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: two rattles (soda cans with rocks inside, or bunches of keys) and two blindfolds

The group forms a loose standing circle. Two people are chosen to be in the middle. They are blindfolded and given rattles. They try to tag each other. The circle of people keeps them within itself. When they tag each other, they choose their replacements.

Ultimate Frisbee

Parameters: 14 to 40 people (an even number)

Materials: a frisbee and orange safety cones or anything else you can find to mark off the playing area

Divide the group into offense and defense teams. Have the teams stand at opposite ends of the field and give the offense the frisbee. The object is to score a touchdown by catching the frisbee while standing in the other team's goal. Players may not run with the frisbee; the team must move it down field by passing it. Your team is on the offensive as long as one of your players has the frisbee in hand. Once the frisbee hits the ground or is intercepted by a member of the other team, the other team is on the offensive.

Step Two: Opening Up



When an individual can share non-threatening areas of his or her life, an exciting step in group building has taken place. If one person perceives that another is genuinely interested in her or his story, then trust will develop between the two. The opening up stage is a perfect time to introduce touch groups (smaller groups of three to eight that meet periodically during the camp or conference). The following games include discussion topics for sharing that work well in the more intimate environment of touch groups.

The exercises done in this step should be flexible, so that people can share to whatever degree they feel comfortable. These games are designed for sharing with limited risk. A group at this stage will generally not share more information than is comfortable to them, but you may want to establish loose

guidelines by affirming the right to pass. Many games involve sharing in more creative ways, with noise and music instead of words. These can be just as powerful for a group at this stage. *Participants go away from these activities enthusiastic about the deepening friendships they are developing in their group.* Many of these games can be adapted to encourage deeper sharing when the group is ready.

The Pie of Life

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity

Materials: paper, markers, scissors

Ask the group to draw a large circle on a piece of paper. Tell the group that the circle they just drew represents a day in their life. Ask the group to cut slices of the pie to represent the amount of time they spend doing different things. Example: the amount of time you sleep on a typical day, at school, daydreaming, with friends, alone. Have them label their slices. After the group has finished slicing their life pies, have them share with the group. Give each person time to talk about one or more of their slices.

The Animal Game:

Parameters: five to 40 people

Materials: Paper and pencils

Distribute the paper and pencils. Each person writes down in secret what kind of animal they would like to be, and in what setting. Example: A dragonfly skimming the surface of a creek in the sunshine. The papers are folded, collected, and mixed up. One person reads each paper aloud and the group decides who wrote it and gives it to them. Some people may receive more than one and others none at all. Then go around the circle and have each person read the paper that they have been given and give them back to their original authors.

Variation: each person decides what animal they feel like right now.

Group Story Variations

Speaking:

Parameters: five to 40 people

Sit in a circle. Start telling a story. When you reach a critical point, break off and let the person sitting on your right take over. Keep the story going until someone finds a way to end it.

Variation: Have a few people in the middle pantomiming the story as it is told.

Writing:

Parameters: five to 40 people

Materials: pencils and paper for each member of the group

Arrange the group in a circle. Distribute paper and pencils. Have each of them start a story on their sheet of paper, introducing the main character(s), the setting,

and an introductory action. Give them about five minutes and then ask them to pass the story on to the person to their left. Let the stories be passed around until each person has contributed to each story. Then have the person who started the story finish it. Let the originators of each story share theirs with the group.

Variation: (for any size group) Write down the beginning of a story in two lines, then fold the paper over so that only the second line is showing. Pass it around the circle with instructions to add two lines and refold the paper so that only the last line is showing. Read the whole story at the end.

Outright Lie

Parameters: five to 15 people

Pass a small object around the circle and make up incredible stories about it.

Example: "This necklace was buried in my grandmothers yard in a sealed envelope from an anonymous lover. . ." Vote on the best story and elect the best liar in the group.

Puzzled Connections:

Parameters: 14 to 60 people (an even number)

Materials: index cards--enough for half of the group to have one each

Write a series of non-invasive questions on a bunch of 3x5 card such as, "What is your first childhood memory?", or "What did you dream last night?" Cut the 3x5 cards so that they make a series of unique, two-piece puzzles. Give half of each card to each person and instruct the group to find their "other half." Then have each pair answer the questions on the finished puzzle.

Snowball Fight

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: Notebook paper and pencils for all

Arrange the group in a circle. Pass out the paper and pencils. Have each person write down a question she would like to have another youth answer (emphasize: not too personal). Then, have everyone crumple up their papers and initiate a snowball fight with the balled up paper as ammunition. After this has gone on for a little while, tell everyone to stop and pick up the nearest ball. Un-crumple the balls, and go around the circle answering questions.

Variation: Write names on the papers. After the snowball fight, pick up a paper ball and read out the person's name. That person can start by telling the group something about himself, then reading the name on the paper he was left holding. Continue until everyone has been introduced.

The Know-It-Ball:

Parameters: five to 60 people

Materials: three differently colored balls, rolled-up socks, or other soft throwable item.

Have the group sit in a circle and give them the balls. The group decides on questions for the three balls to respectively represent. Example: The red ball is the name ball, and whoever catches it must say their name aloud. The blue ball is for one's hometown. The yellow ball is for a one word description that each person chooses for himself, such as "happy", "generous", or "talkative". Have the group toss the balls back and forth around the circle. After everyone has answered at least a few questions, toss the blue ball around and have the group call out the names of those who catch it.

The Pudding Game

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity!

Materials: Enough pudding cups (or vegan alternative) and blindfolds for all. Break the group up into pairs. Blindfold one member of each pair. Have the blindfolded people attempt to feed the pudding to their partners. Switch.

House Memories

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity!

Materials: drawing paper, colored pencils

Distribute the art supplies. Ask everyone to draw the floor plan of a house they lived in before they were ten years old. Have them label each room to the best of their memories. Then ask the group to share individually or in pairs about the memories associated with each room, especially their own.

Variation: ask everyone to design the ideal room for themselves. Encourage them to add as much detail as possible, and incorporate childhood fantasy. Share the designs and reasons behind their choices.

Amateur Psychology

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: Paper and pencils.

Have them write (or remember):

1. their favorite animal, and a word describing it
2. their favorite color and a word describing it
3. their favorite body of water and a word describing it.
4. their favorite fruit and a short description of how they eat it
5. Tell them to close their eyes and imagine themselves in a circular room with smooth high walls and no ceiling. It is night and, although there are no windows or doors, they can look up and see the stars. Have them write down how they feel.

When everyone is finished, reveal the hidden meaning behind what they wrote down. (Do it yourself, first! The hidden meanings are on the last page of this book..) Let discussion ensue. Make up new questions and answers.

One And Only

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: Index cards and pencils

Distribute cards and pencils. Ask each member of the group to write a fact about their life that others in the group may not know. Advise the group not to reveal anything too personal. Make sure no one signs their names to the cards. Collect the cards, shuffle them and redistribute them. Have each person read aloud the information on the card they are holding. After each reading, let the group try to guess whom the card describes.

Madame X

Parameters: five to 15 people

This game is great for van trips. One person, “It,” secretly chooses another person in the group to be Madame X. Go around the circle and give each person in the group a turn to try to find out who “It” is thinking of. They ask questions like, “If Madame X were a color...” or any other category they can think up, and “It” responds. Often, the most creative categories can be the most revealing (and remember, “It” shouldn’t respond with the color Madame X is wearing, but the color Madame X is). When the entire group has had their chance to pose a category, go around the circle once more and let each person guess who they think is Madame X. Then let “It” reveal the true identity of Madame X, and have everyone talk about why they guessed who they did, and what answers surprised them. Let “Madame X” share how it feels to be the subject of so much attention!

Colors

Parameters: five to 15 people

Tell everyone to silently decide on a color. One at a time, have each person go to the middle of the circle and silently (or with non-verbal noise) act like that color. When each person finishes and sits back down in the circle, the group can guess which color he was conveying.

Lemons

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: enough lemons (or other small objects) for the group

Distribute one lemon to each person and sit in a circle on the floor. Tell the group that since no two lemons are the same, they should get to know their lemons. Guide them through this meditative, silent process: Spend the first five minutes with your eyes closed. Explore through touch the unique tactile qualities of your lemon. Pair up. Introduce your lemon to your partner by pointing out its special qualities. Exchange lemons with each other, and notice the difference in the lemons. Now form groups of four to six, and place your lemons in a pile. Close your eyes and find your own lemon. Now form a circle with the whole group. Have one person collect the lemons and redistribute them to different people. Close your eyes, and pass the lemons to the right, feeling each one to find your own. When you’ve found yours, place it aside, and continue passing lemons until everyone has found their own.

Two Truths and A Lie:

Parameters: five to 15 people

A great touch group activity. Have each person in the group come up with two facts and one falsehood about themselves. Go around the circle and have each person present the three statements as if they are all true. Then have each member of the group guess which of the three statements is false.

Variation: Two Lies and a Truth.

Bump:

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: a stereo or musical instrument.

When the music starts, players take a walk around the space, changing directions so that they occasionally bump into other bodies. When the music stops, each player greets the nearest person and discovers as much personal information as possible about them before the music starts up again (five to seven seconds). If two people are paired up more than once, tell them to find out something new about the person each time. Keep it moving quickly until a good number of people have been acquainted.

Hand Jive:

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity

Have the group pair up and take turns attempting to describe a predetermined part of their lives--their room, name, family, using only their hands. Then have each pair share what they thought each other was saying with each other, and with the group.

Feelings and The Weather:

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: Butcher paper and markers

A problem-solving exercise. Brainstorm a list of environmental factors that affect people's feelings and moods. Some items on the list could be weather, colors, temperature, smells, time of day, events, etc. Then ask the group how they could change the environments they live in to ensure the most positive feelings in them. You can start with the youth group room!

Scar Stories

Parameters: five to 15 people

Gather into a circle. Show off scars and tell the stories behind them.

Check In:

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity (with a few modifications)

A classic beginning for any meeting or conference.

Have the group sit in a circle and go around, giving each member a chance to share an anecdote from her life since the group saw them last, a word to describe how she is feeling, or any other tidbit of information she feels the group should know. This format can be altered to fit the group's size and mood. Make sure you allow time to express frustrating emotions youth often feel in their lives. You can pass

around clay or play-dough, and let people express themselves by adding onto or changing the form it takes. You can also pass around a “talking stick” or object to emphasize that this is not the time for verbal feedback but for silent affirmation of the person talking. **Variation:** If your group is very large and prone to long-windedness, suggest one go-around of everyone rating their weeks from one to 10, allowing further check-ins only for one’s, two’s, nine’s, and 10’s.

Mirror Games

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Break the group into pairs. Tell pairs to choose one to be the mirror, one to be the actor. Let them start slow, improvising a dance or carrying out a specific action usually done in front of a mirror, like brushing teeth, or checking out their outfit). Tell them to switch after a while. Then introduce new elements: you are a fun house mirror, exaggerating instead of reflecting; you are an opposite mirror. After a while, let them abandon the switching back and forth, and try to initiate movement and reflect the movement of their partner at the same time.

Rhythm Jam

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Sit in a circle and have one person start a repetitive, rhythmic sound. Go around the circle with each person adding a layer of sound. Use hands, feet or voices--anything goes. When everyone is making noise, you have a variety of options: have one person be the director, telling folks to get softer or louder, silencing everyone so that she can hear a few voices across the circle from each other and how they sound together. Bring all the voices back up for a grand finale. Or, let everyone jam out to each other, without a director.

Variation: make some impromptu instruments out of cans, rubberbands, water jugs, or other found objects before hand.

Body Talk

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: index cards, pencils

Distribute the cards and pencils, have each person write down an emotion or emotional state. Redistribute the cards and tell the group to keep their new card a secret, and to think of how they might express that emotion without words. Split the group into pairs. Give each person a few minutes to nonverbally express their emotion to their partner, while the rest of the group watches. After each display have the partner guess what was written on the card. Let the group guess, then ask the person what emotion was on the card. Discuss what it felt like to give and receive the emotion.

Dealing Stories

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: a deck of cards

Gather the group into a circle and deal a card to each person. The card they receive will determine how many stories and what kind of stories from their lives they will tell the group. You can decide on these designations before-hand. Here are some suggestions:

Hearts: love story

Clubs: funny story

Spades: sad story

Diamonds: made up story

Ace: the story that shows off their best qualities

King: a story about power

Queen: a story about sexual orientation

Jack: a story about someone named Jack.

Go around the circle and hear everyone's story, then re-deal the cards.

Secret Friends

Parameters: 14 to 200 (an even number excluding yourself)

Materials: Manila envelopes, paper, arts and crafts supplies

Secretly break the *entire* group into pairs of "secret friends," and assign each pair a number. Keep a master list! Label one manila envelope with each of the numbers, and give everyone a token or name tag with their number on it. Place the envelopes and the art supplies in a prominent place in the room for the duration of your event. Tell everyone to communicate with their secret friend by leaving messages in the envelope with their number on it. If there is something in the envelope they didn't put there, it's for them. Encourage them to tell their secret friend about themselves without betraying their anonymity and not to wear their name tags or reveal their identities to their secret friends until the end of the specified time. Finally, have a dance or worship in which the identities are revealed.

Step 3: Affirming



The act of encouraging each other through affirmation is crucial to the growing process of a group. Participants in affirming interactions leave the feeling warm and fuzzy about the group and themselves. The point of these games are to make everyone feel great. The games below are especially successful when played in the context of worship. A group must have been through the process of bonding and opening up in order to appreciate worship, and affirmation games can give them the opportunity to reflect on how much they care about each other now.

This feeling is especially crucial at this stage of the community building process. Opening up can be hard for many youth, unaccustomed to the free and

loving environment of YRUU. But affirmation is equally important for later stages of community building, and is especially needed after deeper sharing. Many of these games are appropriate or could be modified for a post Deeper Sharing reflection. *After Opening Up, people need positive feedback before they will consider sharing further.* These games are organized into a sequence from least to most intense. They are all highly appropriate for worship.

Mailbags

Parameters: 15 to infinity!

Materials: Paper lunch bags, arts and crafts supplies, masking tape

Set up a table with these materials. Encourage people to make themselves a mailbag, decorating it with their names and representations of themselves. Have wall-space available for the bags to be taped up, within reach. Encourage people to fill one-another's mailbags with messages of love and affirmation, presents, poems, cookies.

Bedtime Story

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: Children's story, snacks, pj's for all.

Invite everyone to a late night story-reading. Encourage them to wear their pajamas and to bring stuffed animals and blankets. Arrange pillows in a circle on the floor. Pick a new or familiar children's story to read (other short stories are great, too), and pass around the book so that others have a chance to read. Make sure everyone can see the pictures! Close by singing a lullaby and passing out cookies and milk.

The Interconnected Web:

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: A large ball of yarn, scissors.

Have the group stand in a circle. The person holding the ball of yarn begins by choosing someone across the circle to affirm. He says something he loves about her and throws her the ball, while holding on to the end of the yarn. She catches it and chooses a new person. The process continues until everyone is holding onto part of the web. Have the group raise the web above their heads to see how neat it is. Pass around scissors so that everyone can cut a piece of the web to keep as a memento of the community, or find a place to hang up the web.

Variation: When someone catches the ball of yarn they say a word that describes what they bring to the community.

Fame Tags:

Parameters: five to 60 people

Materials: index cards, markers for all, a hole-puncher and yarn.

Pass out the cards and markers, and tell the group to write their names on the cards. For each letter in their names, have them identify a positive ability or quality they possess that others remember them by, for which they are “famous.” Record all these words on the cards. Pass around the hole-puncher and yarn so that they can make name-tags of their cards and wear them.

Variation: Make Super Hero tags. Have each person identify the special quality that they bring to the group and make a Super Hero title out of it, i.e. “Jen, Energizer, Battling the Powers of Complacency,” or “Marc, Smooth-Talker, with Incredible Force-field of Sunshine.”

Affirmation Tag:

Parameters: 40 to 60 people

Tell the group to spread out in the space. Designate one person to be “it”. “It” chases the other players around the space. When she catches one of them, everyone else must freeze while she describes something she loves about the person she has caught. Then the affirmed person becomes “it” and chases after someone else. The object of this game is for everyone to get tagged.

Perfect Lover

Parameters: five to 15 people

This is a great activity for slightly older groups who know one another well. Choose one person to go first. This person must remain quiet while the rest of the group dreams up a perfect lover for them. They can collaborate or take turns telling the story of how they will meet and fall in love, and describing the lover’s details. When they’re done, the person can tell the group three things they especially liked about their imagined lover and three things they would change. Let every member of the group have a turn.

Right On!

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Break the group into smaller groups of four or five each. Then have them come up with a positive cheer, noise or movement for their group. Let each member of the group share an experience in which they had a positive effect on the situation, and have the rest of the group respond with their cheer. When the groups are finished, gather in a circle and sing an uplifting song or chant, ending with every group simultaneously doing their respective cheers.

Love Feast

Parameters: 15 to 60 people and a room or space that it is OK to mess up, and that can be closed off to the group while you prepare.

Materials: honey, cheese and chocolate fondue; fruit, bread and vegetables cut into bite-sized pieces, candles, a boom box and a table.

Set the food up on the table, light the candles, put on some soft, mellow music. Make sure the room has a soothing ambiance. Gather the group outside the room, or in a space away from the table. Explain the guidelines for a Love Feast: Remain

silent; you can't feed yourself, only one another; respect another's right to refuse an offered piece of food by holding a hand over their mouth. Lead them into the space and set them loose (Note: Love Feasts often result in food-fights. You can dissuade this from happening by making a covenant with the group before-hand, or let it happen if there is a source of water nearby)

Making It Real

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Have the group lie on the floor. Lead a guided meditation, in which everyone discovers their most positive attribute and their greatest strengths. Transition into a moving meditation, in which each person involves their whole body in acting out their greatest strength.

Car Wash

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: Paper, markers, masking tape, boom box

This is great activity for the end of a weekend conference or event. Pass out the paper and markers until everyone has one of each, then pass around the tape. Have everyone tape the papers on one another's backs. Then, stand and walk around the room, writing positive things about each person on their backs. Play some instrumental music. **Variation: (Parameters:** five to 15 people)

Sit in a circle. Have each person write their name on the top of both sides of their paper and fold it in half. On the surfaces showing, they can write positive adjectives or statements describing themselves. Tell them to refold the paper so that their adjectives are hidden, and pass their papers around so that everyone can write positive adjectives on the other side. Continue passing until all papers arrive at their owners.

Hand Cream Orgy

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: hand cream

Explain the activity and make sure everyone feels comfortable with it. Sit in a circle, with all hands extended into the middle. Pour a generous amount of hand cream onto the pile of hands and encourage everyone to massage the hands they are touching until all of the hand cream is absorbed.

Massage

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity!

Form a seated circle. Play some soothing music on a boom box so that everyone can take part. Ask the group to turn to their right and begin to massage the shoulders of the person in front of them. Remind them to turn and face the other direction when the song changes. Ask them to meditate on happy memories or on the love they feel for the group. **Variation:** Sometimes people are more comfortable working in pairs, because they can devote their attention to either

giving or receiving. Pair up and massage one another's heads, hands, feet, or shoulders.

Variation: Ask a massage therapist to lead a workshop on massage techniques before you do this activity.



Carousel:

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Break the group into two equal groups and have them form two circles, one inside the other. Those on the inside circle close their eyes and wait while those in the outside circle think of a compliment they have always wanted someone to say to them. Then the outside circle slowly rotates around the inner, whispering these compliments in each person's ears. When they have gone all the way around, let the silence settle and the inner circle can slowly open their eyes. Let those on the outer and inner circles switch places and repeat the process.

Potter's Wheel

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Have everyone sit in a circle and invite one person to sit in the middle. She closes her eyes and remains quiet. Those in the circle, whenever they feel moved to speak, may say why they appreciate and love the person in the middle. When the spoken affirmations cease, the person in the middle opens her eyes and picks her replacement. Continue until everyone has had a chance.

Foot Washing

Parameters: five to 60 people

Materials: tubs filled with warm and soapy or scented water, sponges, towels, massage oil, candles, pillows.

This activity is a classic from the biblical days and was adopted by LRY (Liberal Religious Youth). Improvise and make it your own. Establish the atmosphere by lighting candles and setting up in advance. Pair up and wash one another's feet slowly and carefully. Finish up with foot massage, then invite everyone to put their clean, happy feet in the middle and wiggle their toes.

Sensorium

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: Lovely stuff for the senses: incense, live or recorded music, food.

The group chooses one person to receive the loving attention of the others. She lies down in the middle and closes her eyes. The rest of the group appeals to all of her senses to make her feel loved, by lighting incense, playing soft music, giving her something yummy to taste, and massaging her hands, feet, head. After a period of time, she rises, and the next member takes a turn.

Angel Wash Variations

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Form two lines facing each other. Have one person from the end of the line (or two people holding hands) close their eyes and place their arms crossed on their chest. Direct them to proceed down the aisle of the double line with their eyes closed. As they pass, each person washes their aura with their hands, passing their fingers and hands lightly over their body, from the crown of their head to the ground, without actually touching them. If the person should stray, the people in the lines can gently direct them back on course. When they reach the end, their friends can communicate to them, with touch, that its time to open their eyes. Continue until everyone has had a chance.

Variation: With a larger group, form two circles, the inside and outside facing each other.

Variation: Replace the aura wash with hugs or other forms of loving touch.

Variation: Replace the aura wash with whispered words of affirmation, emphasizing the fact that the group can express specific things they appreciate about the person that they might be afraid to express if their eyes were open.

Variation: Replace the aura wash with smudging (wafting the smoke of a burning sage stick over the person) or anointing (marking the person on her face with holy water, scented oil, mud, or glitter).

Vision

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Play soft music or have silence. Stand and form a circle with the group, holding hands. Then flatten the circle into two lines facing one another, about a yard apart. Make certain that everyone has another directly opposite them. Have each person hold steady eye contact with the person opposite them. When the group is ready, everyone can take a step to the right and silently look into the eyes of the next

person in line. If you have an odd number of people, everyone will have a chance to gaze down the two rows of profiles when they reach the end of the line. Continue until all have returned to their original partners.

Quick energy breaks

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity!

Tone Singing

Have each person close their eyes release sound on a different tone. (“Om” or “Ooooooo”). Hold the tones as long as possible, taking staggered breaths so that the sound is constant. Listen as the voices come into harmony with each other.

Group Sneeze

Sneeze out all the negative energy with this one. Divide the group into 3 sections. Assign the word “Russia” to one, “Prussia” to another, and “Massachusetts” to third. Have everyone sneeze their word loudly at the same time.

Zoom

Form a standing circle, then have everyone hold hands and squat down. As they slowly come up to standing, have them say “zzzzzzzzzzooooooooooooooooom!” (or any other joyful noise or word) and end with a jump in the air.

Oomwah!

Have the group spread out in the space. Tell them to relax their bodies. As they say “Oooooom” have them clench every muscle in their bodies; hands, tummy, faces; until they are in scrunched up little balls. Then, on “Wah!” have them release all of the tension and sprawl out on the floor.

Acorn/Tree

Form a standing circle. Have everyone gradually crouch down, making themselves as small as possible. As they do this, have them say, “Acorn, acorn, acorn...” getting softer and softer. Then, simultaneously jump up into the air and say “TREE!!” with enthusiasm. Do this one several times to energize a tired group.

Step 4: Stretching



Difficult situations naturally arise if the group is together long enough. These situations are catalysts for stretching. However, since many youth groups are together for only a short period you may not want to wait for a stretching experience to surface on its own. It is sometimes necessary to initiate one. The following games include a wide variety of stretching exercises. Some introduce the issues that allow stretching to occur through symbolic means, while others ask players to draw from their own lives. Above all, these games are experiential. Many of them have hidden goals and benefits for the participants. For these games to work, everyone must actively participate, remaining aware of the emotions that arise in the course of playing. Group members facing struggles together must actively care for each other. Individuals cannot merely say they care for each other in a stretching exercise; they must actively show it.

Stretching experiences reap many benefits. They create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable enough to expose their imperfections to the group. It is vital to conclude stretching exercises with a talk-back or open-ended discussion

of what just happened. If the time is right, these discussions will lead right into deeper sharing of the issues that came up for individuals and for the group

Stretching experiences can be a tremendous catalyst for personal growth. Facing and overcoming programmed difficulties give young people the confidence that they can cope with the everyday problems they face. They learn that they can accomplish more than they thought possible, if they believe in themselves

Trust Walk Variations:

Parameters: perfect for a group from two to infinity!

These exercises are adaptations of an essential idea--the value of interdependence. The group tests the boundaries of their trust in one another by experimenting with dependency. The trust walk also challenges group members to expand their perception of the world to include information picked up by senses other than sight. These exercises work best, but a large indoor space will do.

Ask group members to pair up. Explain the trust walk: One partner will shut his eyes or be blindfolded. The other will be his guide, and lead him by touch around the space. You can decide whether to allow speaking or not. The guide is responsible for the safety of her partner. Encourage her to explore unusual areas where the air might feel different. Have all pairs return after a specified time and switch roles. If you have any blind youth, you might leave space for them to share at the end of this exercise.

Variation: Have the guides lead their partners to within a few inches of a wall, then tell their partners to open their eyes.

Variation: Have the pairs stand back to back. Tell the guides to lead their partners around the space without breaking contact.

Variation: Have the guides lead their partners from the middle of the room to an object somewhere on the periphery. They can take a round-about route to this object, so as not to betray its location to their partner. When they have chosen objects, have them place their partners' hands on the objects and encourage them to explore the texture, weight, smell, sounds of the objects. Then have everyone return to the center and open their eyes. Have the partners attempt to find their object with their eyes open.

Trust Fall

Parameters: two to 60 people

Divide the group into pairs. In each pair, have one person stand directly in front of her partner, with her back turned toward him. Tell her to close her eyes and fall backwards toward her partner. Her partner will catch her under the arms and take her weight gently to the floor, or bounce her back up to standing. Have the partners reverse roles. **Variation:** Break the group into groups of four to six people. Have them arrange themselves in circles with one member in the middle. Have everyone in the circle take a solid stance: one foot positioned in front of the other and hands out, ready to catch the falling body. The person in the middle can prepare to fall by

closing his eyes, crossing his hands over his chest and relaxing his body while remaining erect. He can then ask the group whether they are ready to catch him, and fall in whichever direction gravity takes him. Have the groups pass his body between them and play with different speeds.

Trust Carry

Parameters: 10 to 60 people and a large open space

Divide the group into groups of nine to 11. Have one member of each group lie on his back on the floor, while the rest of the group stands on all sides of the body. Have the standing members gently slide their hands under the body, being careful to support the head, torso, and pelvis. They can then lift the body over their heads, and carry him around the room or rock him gently. Tell the person being lifted to completely relax his body and take in the sensations of being carried. Then the group can slowly bring him down to the floor and take turns being lifted.

Variation: Place an object on a table. Make a line with masking tape four feet from the table. Move the whole group to behind the line. Tell them they have a mission: to pick each person up in turn, move them to the object and have them touch the object with a body part (finger, nose, shoulder) while the group is in complete control of the task. They must pick up every person in the group, and no body part can be repeated.

Forest Trail:

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Have the group form a double line with people facing each other and standing about three feet apart. Have them extend their arms forward and imagine that they are trees in a forest. Then have one person stand at the end of the aisle, close their eyes and start walking through. They must get through the interweaving of branches in order to proceed through to the other side. Sometimes the branches may be stiff and require a firm push to get past, other times they are as soft as ferns. When they reach the end, they can open their eyes, return to one of the lines and become part of the forest. Let everyone have a turn.

Human Scavenger Hunt

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: photocopies of the statements, made in advance

This is a good game to lead into a discussion of diversity.

Come up with a list of statements ranging from silly to meaningful, that could pertain to the people in the group. Some examples are "I have seen more than fifty Simpsons episodes," or, "I don't believe in God." Make sure at least some of them will only pertain to a few people, if any. Write out the statements and leave a blank space next to each one. Distribute the papers among the group members, and tell them to find one person for each statement. You can stop the game before everyone is done, and discuss which spaces were easiest/hardest to fill.

Love/Hate Maze

Parameters: 15 to 40 people and a large open space

Materials: blindfold

One is chosen and blindfolded. The rest take up random or staggered positions around the room, creating a human maze through which "it" can wander.

At first the maze is loving. Say, "We love you, we're open, you trust us." "It" is spun and sent wandering. Every time she comes in contact with someone, this person caresses her, whispers messages of love and friendship, guides her on her way. After this goes on for a while, say "Freeze! You are surrounded, we hate you, we're all out to get you." The group now creates a hostile environment by bumping, misdirecting, and tapping the wandering "it." After only a short while, return to the loving maze. *Always end on a long session of loving maze.* Un-blindfold "it" and bring the group into a circle for a discussion. Ask "it" about her feelings in reaction to the group. Ask the rest about their own feelings and their observations of "it's" posture, gait and body motions during the two mazes.

Breaking Stereotypes

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Sit or stand in a circle. Ask the group to think of human categories that they fall into and the stereotypes normally associated with these categories. Some examples are: woman, queer, white, student, sister, poor, short. Then ask them to think of ways in which they do not fit into the stereotype. Ask them to voice what they are thinking about when they feel moved to speak. Give an example by making your own statement: "I'm a blond but I'm not stupid," or "I'm a mother but I have my own life." Let the sharing continue until everyone has spoken.

Variation: (Materials: index cards and pencils for everyone.)

Pass out the cards and pencils. Give everyone a few minutes to write down adjectives that they feel describe them as part of a group like young, Irish, straight, or punk. Go around the circle reading out the cards. Choose someone to facilitate a discussion about people's reactions to the words on the cards.

Pins and Needles

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: Paper and pencils, plastic straws and straight pins

Divide the group into at least 3 smaller groups, with at least 5 members each. One person in each group will be the leader. Talk to them each privately and explain what style of leadership they should adopt for their group. The three styles are: Autocratic (give orders like a dictator, not accepting others suggestions), Laissez-faire (stay out of decision-making, letting the group do what it wants), and Democratic (guide the group through a consensus process on all decisions, making sure everyone's voice is heard).

One person in each group is an observer. Give them a pencil and worksheet with the following questions: Who is the leader? Describe his/her leadership. Describe others' behavior in reaction to the leader. Describe the group atmosphere. How fully did all participate?

Distribute drinking straws and pins among the groups. Tell them their task is to create a structure. They have 15-20 minutes. Bring everyone together and share observations and reactions.

Human Machine:

Parameters: five to 15 people

The object is to build a moving, churning, humming human machine. Have one person start with a motion, and noise to go with it, in the center of the room. When someone feels moved to do so, he can go to her and become a part in the machine, with a motion that interacts with the first and a sound that fits rhythmically. Let the machine grow until every person is in place. Then pick one person and whisper in her ear to begin malfunctioning, to get off the beat or start blocking another person's motion. Let the machine slowly break down until everything is utter cacophony. Then quiet the group down and talk about what happened.

The Number Game

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: chairs for all

Arrange everyone in a circle. Explain: "In this game, the best thing to be is Number One. Number One is the most wonderful and powerful person in the game because she gets to make the rules. I am Number One and the person to my right is Number Two. Number Two is a pretty awesome thing to be, because its almost Number One, but not quite. Number Three, the person the right of Number Two is also high up in the hierarchy--one of the royalty in this game, if you will--but not quite as good as Number Two or Number One. There is no Number Four. The person to the right of Number Three is Number Five, and the numbers proceed counter-clockwise around the circle. The goal of the game is to be Number One." Begin by saying your number and someone else's number: "Number One, Number 12." Then Number 12 must remember who he is and say, in rhythm, "Number 12, Number Five". If someone forgets her number, or gets out of rhythm, or says "number four" by accident, she must move to the last seat, and everyone shifts up one to fill her seat. Everyone moves up, but now they must now learn a new number. If Number One messes up, Number Two becomes Number One and can change all the rules and goals entirely.

Stop the game after several people have had the chance to be Number One. Make sure to discuss this one when it's over.

Power Shuffle

Parameters: 15 to 60 people and a large room

Come up with a list of questions to ask the group that forces its members to make a choice between yes and no. The list should begin with easy, fun questions, like, "Do you consider yourself an artist?" or "Are you a lifelong U. U?", and proceed to more difficult questions like, "Are your parents are married?" or "Do you have prejudices against others?" Depending on how ready the group is, you may want to include even the most challenging choices, such as "Are you a good person?"

Explain the exercise to the group. Ask everyone to move to one side of the room. Tell them that you will ask a series of questions and they will choose “Yes” or “No” as their answer to each. The side they are now standing on represents “No,” the opposite side of the room represents “Yes.” After the question is posed, they will move, in silence, to the “Yes” or the “No” side of the room, to represent their choice. They must choose one side; there is no middle ground. Stand in the front of the room, in the middle of the two walls, to read the questions. Allow time for everyone to make their choice and move to their wall. Once everyone is still, let them look at the people on their side of the room and across at those on the other side, and return to “No” before reading the next question.

Close the exercise with a circle sharing, or by lighting candles of celebration and concern.

The Lap Game

Parameters: 15 to 40 people

Materials: enough chairs for everyone in the group, arranged in a circle.

This game is best for people who already know each other. Have everyone find a chair. Explain the game: when someone shouts out a question, everyone will answer without talking, by changing seats. Anyone can call out a question, but it is a good idea to start with funny, mellow questions and proceed to more intense ones. Some examples: “Everyone over 6 feet tall move three seats to the left,” or “Move as many seats to the right as siblings you have.” If there is someone in the seat you move to, sit on their lap. Traditionally, the game ends when someone who is bored says, “Everyone who is alive go sit on so-and-so’s lap.”

Variation: come up with a scripted set of questions to read to the group, Power Shuffle-style.

Space Ship Catastrophe

Parameters: a group of any size divisible into equal subgroups of 10 or more, leaders for each group, and a separate room for each group.

Materials: identical lists for each group, index cards for each member.

Come up with a list of characters to be copied and given to each leader, and write each character on an index card to be distributed to team members. Divide the group into equal teams. Have a leader take each team into a different room and give them identical explanations. The scenario: They are in a space shuttle circling the Earth, and have just witnessed its destruction in World War III. There is no human life, and very little plant and animal life left on Earth. Their ship is rapidly running out of supplies and oxygen. They have one emergency craft that can return to Earth by using the remainder of their energy, but it only seats one fourth of the people now on board. They will each be given an identity of someone on board, and they must defend their right to live, and come to consensus as a group about who will get a place on the rescue craft. Pass out the index cards. Each character should have advantages and disadvantages. For example, “A” might be a young fertile man, but he has a history of heart disease, or “B” might be post-menopausal, but she has a doctorate in world literature. Have the leaders leave them the master

list and shut them in the room, instructing them not to emerge until they have decided and agreed.

Silent Tension

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

In your group, brainstorm ideas for scenes (i.e. characters and situations) that would create so much dramatic tension that the characters would be unable to speak.

Examples: Two players. Where - a restaurant. Who - a couple. What - they've just broken their engagement. Or, three players. Where - a bedroom. Who - an old man who is dying, his son and his daughter in law. What - the couple is waiting for him to die, and he knows it. What is going on between the characters must be communicated in the silence between them. Ask for volunteers to be actors in the improvised scenes. Remind them that there is no dialogue, but to act on their impulses. After you do a couple scenes invite responses from audience and actors.

Step 5: Deeper Sharing & Goal Setting



At this stage, structured activities are not as necessary. The group will have the confidence and communication skills to come up with their own activities. They are probably comfortable just hanging out. However, a few of the opening up activities, as well as the ones below, can help allow space for the kind of sharing this group is capable of. *At this stage, individuals share deeply with one another and set goals. The youth group becomes a setting where young people can express their visions of the future and present struggles. A group at this stage will inevitably probe deeply into any set of questions they are given for discussion.*

When a group member shares a problem, the rest of the group gives support and encouragement by expressing sympathy. If the topics for discussion

or activity seem to have the potential for painful memories or personal facts to come up, it is a good idea to set some ground rules before-hand. Ask the group what rules would make them feel most comfortable with sharing, but be sure to include the following:

1. No information shared in the room leaves the room, unless someone's safety is at risk.
2. Responses to sharing are affirming and loving, not critical.
3. Everyone has the right to pass.

Hand Grok

Parameters: 14 to 40 people (an even number excluding yourself)

Have the group spread out around the room and close their eyes. Pair people up by leading them by the hand across the room to the partner you have chosen for them, while everyone's eyes remain closed. Pair people that know one another in the context of the group, but may never have had the chance to bond on a personal level. Tell the partners to sit and spend time holding one another's hands. Ask them to communicate with one another in silence, through touch alone. Let this process continue for 10 minutes or longer. Then have the group members open their eyes and talk to one another about what they learned about one another through the exercise.

What are you afraid of?

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Ask the group to sit in a circle and light a chalice. Pose this question into the silence: "What are you afraid of?" and invite the group members to respond whenever they feel moved to speak.

Variation: Break the group into pairs. Have one partner ask the other, "What are you afraid of?" The other answers and the first affirms the answer by saying "Thank you." Then the roles reverse.

Love/Hate

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Ask the group to sit in a circle and light a chalice. Establish a premise of confidentiality for the conversation. Pose two questions into the silence: "What do you love?," and "What do you hate?" Encourage people to respond to either or both of the questions whenever they feel moved to speak. When the sharing comes to a close, initiate a conversation about love and hate.

Guess Who?

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: Paper and pencils for all

Arrange the group in a circle. Pass out the paper and pencils. Give everyone five minutes to write on a predetermined topic (recent dreams, childhood, a day in my

life). Gather the papers and pass them back out. Go around the circle and read the papers, guessing who wrote them. Then go around again and reveal the true authors.

10 Fingers

Parameters: five to 15 people

Another great one for van rides, with a group that knows each other well.

Everyone holds up 10 fingers. Each person gets a turn to say something that they have never done. For example, "I have never been to California." Everyone in the group who has been to California must fold one finger down. The first person to have all 10 fingers folded into fists loses (or wins) the game.

This game can rapidly degenerate into a competition to be the most daring, experienced person in the room, unless everyone is very conscious of what they are saying, and how it might affect the other players. Try to lead the conversation away from sexual and drug-related exploits if it makes people uncomfortable.

Up in Smoke

Parameters: five to 60 people

Materials: small slips of paper (try to find Buddhist burning paper at an oriental market), pens, a chalice, and a non-wooden bowl.

This activity is especially appropriate during a time of new beginning (Winter Solstice, Chinese New Year, or the beginning of a conference). Lead a meditation that gets everyone thinking about the qualities of their personality they consider negative. Distribute the paper and pens and have everyone write one quality, habit, or situation that they want to be burned clean of in the future. Let members of the group come into the center as they feel moved to, and share the meaning behind the words on their paper, then light it from the chalice flame and drop it into the bowl.

Variation: Put the slips of paper in a bowl of water

Tell All

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: a bag of treats

Pass around the bag saying, "Take only a few, and don't eat them yet" Once everyone has their treats, announce that they have to tell one thing about themselves for every treat they took.

Variation: "TP shortage." Announce that the conference or event you are attending is having a toilet paper shortage. Pass around a roll and tell everyone to take all they will need for the rest of the conference. Then tell them they have to tell one thing about themselves for every square of toilet paper they took.

Lottery Questions

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: paper, pencils

Pass out slips of paper and pencils to all. Have everyone write down a question for the entire group. Ensure that questions fall into the intensity level that is right for the group. Pass around a hat to collect the questions, then pull questions out at random and have the individuals respond.

Life Line

Parameters: five to 15 people

Materials: paper, pencils

Have each person draw a vertical line down the middle of their page. At the bottom of the line write "0" and your birth date, at the top write the age you expect to live to, and a date that many years in the future. On the line indicate the age you are now and what you're doing now. Write in what you would like to be doing five years from now, ten years from now. Group members can share goals and discuss one other's hopes for the future. You may want to talk about what problems are blocking their achievement, and let the group help each other come up with solutions.

Variation: Make the time lines only from birth to the present. Have each person remember pivotal moments in their lives and mark them on the lines.

Recent Dreams

Parameters: 15 to 60 people

Materials: Paper, pencils

Ask the group to remember their most recent dream (a guided meditation might bring them to the right state of mind). Have them either draw or write whatever images or feelings they remember from their dream in a stream-of-consciousness style. Then have each member share parts or all of his creation.

Back To Back:

Parameters: 14 to 40

Materials: paper, crayons

Let the group choose an interesting issue or subject for a conversation. Break the group into pairs and let them find an isolated space for themselves. Tell them to sit back-to-back with their partner, and take turns talking--saying whatever comes to their mind on the subject--for two minutes each.

Variation: While one person describes their favorite place in the world or in their imagination, the other person draws what they are hearing on the paper. Come back to the group and talk about this conversation.

Variation: Give both partners paper and crayons. Concentrate on drawing the same picture without looking. Compare drawings after a time.

God in the Dark:

Parameters: 15 to 40 people and an outside space at night or an inside space that can be made dark.

In a darkened space, have the group lie on the floor facing up. Ask the group to pose anonymous questions to the ceiling. Heavy philosophical questions are good, as are more personal ones. Here are some good ones:

Suppose you have a magic box. It can be any size or shape. In it can be anything you want that would make you happy. What is in your box?

Suppose a doctor had just told you that you have only one year left to live. What would you do differently? How would you change your life?

Let the answers come from anyone who feels moved to speak.

Geography of the Self:

Parameters: five to 15 people and room to spread out.

Materials: Butcher paper and markers

Break the group into pairs and have partners trace one another's bodies on their sheets of butcher paper. Then have each person work separately to turn their body into a map. Pose some questions: Where are the boundaries of your body? Where are the populated areas? Your depressed inner cities? Your deserts? Your rivers? Your mountains ranges? Cliffs? Jungles? Which territories are at war with each other? Where are your main roads? Where are your uncharted lands? Your frontiers? Give each person a chance to share their map or display them around the room.

Emoticards

Parameters: five to 60 people

Materials: enough index cards and pencils for everyone

Pass out the cards and writing implements. Tell everyone to write down an emotion (not necessarily one they are currently feeling). Encourage them to be specific, and to use whatever word occurs to them, even if it is not traditionally the name of an emotion. Distrust, joy, befuddlement, impossible, excitement, destroy, lavender, bubble--all of these words are fine.

Collect the cards and deposit them in the middle of the circle. Play some soft music and invite everyone to go to find a card that describes how they are feeling right now.

Once all the cards are claimed, invite a few or all members of the group to share their emotions and explain why they chose them

Fishbowl

Parameters: 30 to 60 people

Materials: six to eight index cards and two pencils

Break the group into two subgroups who have something in common with each other. For example: Adults and Youth, Girls and Boys. Have the two groups meet separately and come up with three to four questions for the other group. Reconvene and exchange cards. Form two circles, one subgroup inside the other, both facing in. Have the inside group read a question and have a discussion about it. The outside circle cannot speak, only listen. Go through each question, making sure everyone in the inner circle has a chance to speak. Then reverse circles.



Answers to "Amateur Psychology"
1. Animal: How others see you
2. Color: How you see yourself
3. Water: How you relate to your sexuality, or the qualities of your sexual life
4. Fruit: How you make friends with somebody
5. Room: How you deal with your own mortality, or how you will feel when you die.