



ICEBREAKER

“The Clap”

DURATION: 15-20 minutes

NUMBER: A group of 10-30 (or even 40 if they are patient and relatively cooperative).

DIRECTIONS:

Direct group to form a circle.

STAGE 1

Instruct the group that you will be sending a clap around the circle. It will pass left to right or right to left, each person sending it on to the person next to them.

Clearly model the guidelines as you explain them:

1. You must turn to the person you are sending it to.
2. You must make eye contact.
3. You must clap and point your hands towards them.

Start it and let the group take it once around the circle (or twice if they're moving pretty slow). This is usually pretty simple and easy.

STAGE 2

1. Once the clap has arrived back to you, say, ‘Now for the next round, when the clap comes to you, you can do one of two things, you can pass it on, OR, you can turn and send it back.’

2. Model this clearly. Have the person next to you send you the clap, and give it right back to them, with clear eye contact and pointing your hands at them. Ready?

3. Start the clap around again. Be sure and coach actively to keep up good form (“Make sure you’re making eye contact” or “Point your hands at them”). It will be even more important in Stage 3.

NOTE: The clap may get stuck at one part of the circle. If this happens and one side is constantly neglected, pause the activity and ask the neglected side how they are feeling. They’ll respond with frustration, etc.

Remind the group that it still needs to get around eventually so everyone gets a chance.

4. Encourage the group to try and get faster and faster. Once they’re moving it around and back and forth pretty quickly, gaining confidence, and having fun with it, move on to Stage 3.

STAGE 3

1. Once stage 2 has gotten going fast, take the clap when it comes to you and shoot it across the circle. Model very clearly: take a step forward, make eye contact, and point with your hands and arms at your (startled) target. Remind the group at this point how important eye contact and pointing is. More coaching and encouragement is required as they wrestle with this new task. People will make mistakes, get confused, etc.



2. If they really work at it, this can get going pretty fast. If they need incentive, show them a high-functioning example: Pause and ask for a few volunteers (4 or 5) to step into the middle and play it by themselves while the rest of the group observes. This small group will get cracking pretty quick. Ask them to step back and ask the whole group to see if they can go this quickly.

Other suggestions:

--Have the group reshuffle if certain parts of the circle seem consistently slow or low energy.

--Ask them questions about what they need to do to make it go faster (readiness is important, following the clap with your eyes as it moves around, standing on the balls of your feet instead of leaning back)

3. Stop the activity whenever the group seems ready to quit, hands are tired, or they've had a good laugh about something.

Possible Debrief

1. What was this experience like for you? What were you feeling at different times? What was the group's reaction to sending the clap across the circle?

2. What made this a challenging exercise? What is required of each member for the clap to move quickly?

3. What can we learn from this about working as a group? About paying attention? About focus? Why are eye contact and paying attention so critical?

4. What happens in a group discussion when everyone is really focused on these things?