

## Games

The following are a number of games (also known as ice breakers, light and lovelies) gathered from training around the world

### LIFEBOATS

In this exercise, participants get together with people based on various similarities. For example, if you said “Get together with people who share favorite fruits” everyone would call out their favorite fruit – finding other people who share the same similarity and getting into a group with them. Demonstrate and then have them do it. Have the various groups call out their favorite fruit group-by-group. Continue changing up groups by calling out a range of issues, from the silly to the serious: e.g., favorite animal, least favorite letter of the Roman alphabet, religious tradition and so on.

### WHEN SHE WENT TO VENUS...

Have the group stand in a large circle. Explain this active warm-up activity. The first person says: “Did you hear?” The second person (the person to their right) says: “What?” First person: “Mrs. McGarity went to Venus.” Second: “Really how?” First person: “She went to Venus like this!” – and the first person proceeds to make some repetitive motion. Everyone in the circle repeats the motion (and continues repeating the motion). Then, the person to the left of the first person repeats that same series: “Did you hear?/What?/Mrs. McGarity went to Venus./Really, how?/She went to Venus like this” and makes his/her own motion (which the whole groups repeats). The process continues around the entire circle until ending when everyone has done it. (In large groups, this can be done in several separate groups simultaneously.)

### PUT TOGETHER THE “COY” (FROM OUYPORN KHUANKAEW, THAILAND)

In this game everyone is going to be Thai currency (can be adapted to be any currency). How it works: if you are older than 46, you will be 1 baht. If you are 39-46, you will be 25 sadang [1/4 of a baht]. If you are under 36, you will be 50 sadang [1/2 baht]. Then, trainer calls out some amount of baht. For example, “2-1/2 baht, 3.75 baht, and so on.” After each calling, the participants try to get into physical groups that equal that amount of currency.

### SHOPPING FRUIT BASKET (FROM OUYPORN KHUANKAEW, THAILAND)

Have everyone sitting down in a circle. Pick a category such as fruit, books, animals. Have someone walks around inside the circle and begins “shopping” for items in that category (naming them out loud). Everyone else picks an item in their head in that category (if the category is fruit: they might come up with oranges or durian or bananas). If someone’s choice has been called then they stand up behind the person and follow them around. The person continues calling out items until they are done. Then they declare “check-out” and everyone tries to find a seat to sit in. The person left standing then walks around the circle....

### HONEY I LOVE YOU BUT I JUST CAN’T SMILE...

Have the group stand in a large circle. As facilitator, stand in the center. In this exercise, whoever is in the center (currently the facilitator) is going to try to make someone in the circle smile. He or she can walk up and pick one person. Then, without touching the person, the person

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in the center tries to make the person smile by saying: “Honey, if you really love me, will you please smile for me?” The person in the outside circle has to reply: “Honey, I love you but I just can’t smile.” If he/she smiles when saying that they change places with the person in the center – becoming the next person in the center.

## SOMETHING TRUE ABOUT YOURSELF (FROM GERALD GOMANI, ZIMBABWE)

Have each participant write down something true about themselves (anything), without their names, on a piece of paper. Then, have them wad it up. Then, throw snowballs at each other! After a few minutes of play, have the group read the snowballs if you wish. Great for tension release!

## WHY... BECAUSE... (FROM GERALD GOMANI, ZIMBABWE)

Have people on one half of the group write down a Why question (“Why is the grass green? Why is there suffering?” etc). Have the other half write down a Because answer (“Because I said so. Because it can float.” etc). Give no indication for the purpose or what types of why questions or because answers people should write. Then – and this can be a hilarious exercise – go around the room and have the Why’s ask a question and get their answer from the Because’s.

## BACK TO BACK\*

Explain that this is a changing partners game. Everyone will start with a partner except you. Partners will stand either Back to Back or Face to Face. When you call out either Back to Back or Face to Face everyone has to change partners and arrange themselves according to what was called. Of course you will try to find a partner, so someone else will become the leader. Ask everyone to find a partner. A variation: caller can change the body parts, e.g., calling “hand to hand”, “hand to knee”, “elbow to ear.”

## BALLOON BOUNCE\*

You will need four matching balloons for each team; a large triangle indicated on the floor with masking tape. Have each team arrange themselves at the corner of a triangle. Explain that the teams will have to move their four balloons to the side of the triangle opposite them, keeping the balloons in the air at all times.

## BIG MOUTH\*

Get three volunteers in center circle. Ask a question. Each one takes a deep breath, answers the question seeing which one can keep going the longest without taking a new breath. Use semi-serious questions like “What’s the best way to raise children?” People can come up with important-sounding answers, in an atmosphere in which content is not important and fun is the object.

## BIG SIGH\*

Get into a circle, leader in the middle. Everyone follows what the leader does. Leader crouches on the floor, hands on the floor, and slowly rises, giving an increasingly loud sigh as she/he does so, ending with arms stretched high and the sigh becomes a shout. Very good for relieving tensions.

## BIG WIND BLOWS\*

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There are just enough seats in the circle for everyone but you. You are the big wind, and whoever you blow on has to move. Instead of blowing, you call out, “The big wind blows on everyone who...” and then add your own description; for example, “on everyone who wears black socks,” or “everyone who has two ears.” Everyone who fits the description must get up and change seats; in the general commotion, you try to get a seat also. Whoever is left standing there, gets to be the Big Wind next time. If the Big Wind calls “hurricane” then everyone has to change seats.

## BUMP TAG\*

Get into pairs standing shoulder to shoulder, scattered around the room. Choose one pair and make one person “It” and one person the runner. “It” chases runner to tag him – if tagged, runner becomes “It”. Runner may escape at any time by lining up with any pair, person on other end becomes new runner.

## CROCODILE AND FROGS\*

You will need a noise maker of some kind for the crocodile to use: an old plastic pill bottle filled with pebbles, a tin can and a stick to beat it with will do. Imagine the room as a pond. All participants are frogs except for one who is designated as the crocodile. A dozen or more sheets of newspaper or newsprint are spread randomly across the floor. These represent lily pads. The goal of the crocodile is to eat the frogs; the goal of the frogs is to escape being eaten. When the crocodile is making noise with her/his noisemaker, she/he is sleeping and snoring, and the frogs are safe in the pond. When the noise stops the crocodile is awake – the frogs are still safe as long as they are standing on the lily pads. When the noise is being made, the frogs must move around the pond, but not step on the lily pads. When the noise stops the frogs must jump onto a lily pad before the crocodile gets them. More than one frog can stand on a lily pad if they can manage it, but each frog must either have both feet on the lily pad with a little paper showing around the edge of each shoe, or one foot on the paper with the other foot raised in the air. As she/he makes noise, the crocodile goes around the room and removes three or four sheets of paper. When she/he stops making noise, all frogs not completely on the papers are caught and are out of the game. Then the process is repeated, more sheets of paper are removed, and more frogs are caught, until there is only one piece of paper left, and nearly all the frogs are caught.

## EARTHQUAKE\*

This dynamic involves “houses” and “tenants.”: A house is made with two people facing each other with arms held high and palms touching. Have two co-facilitators show this. A tenant is a person who goes into a house, which means, stands under the arch made by the two house-people. Ask a volunteer to do this. Ask everyone to form trios as demonstrated. If you call “tenant,” all tenants must move; if call “houses,” all houses, staying together, must move over a new tenant. The leader can be considered a tenant. “Earthquake,” all houses break up and everyone forms new trios. Role will probably change. You, of course, will be looking for a spot. If you find one, the person without a post will become the leader.

## ELEPHANTS AND PALM TREES\*

The person in the center of the circle points to someone and says “elephant.” That person bends over and puts hands down to make a trunk. People on either side of him or her put their arms up to make his/her elephant ears. If the person in the center says “Palm Tree,” the person pointed to hold hands straight above his/her head. People on either side make branches going out from the

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tree. After trying this a few times, the leader says “skunk,” the person pointed to turns around with a hand behind for a tail. People on either side turn away holding their noses. As the pace picks up anyone hesitating becomes the person in the center.

## MOLASSES TAG\*

Play tag as usual (one “it,” tags any other person, who becomes “it”) except that everyone must use slow exaggerated motions, as if swimming through molasses. (Works well with groups with a wide range of physical abilities.)

## TOUCH BLUE\*

Leader calls a color: “Touch Blue,” and everyone must touch something blue on another person. Continue with other colors and descriptions.

## MACHINE\*

One person begins with any mechanical noise and motion, repeated in machine-like fashion. Others connect themselves when they see a place in the machine where they would like to fit in.

## LINE-UP\*

This dynamic challenges everyone to cooperate in silence – they may, however, use gestures. The group’s task is to arrange themselves in order, according to the month and day of their births. If they ask, “Where is the beginning of the line?” say that they’ll have to figure that out in silence. When movement ends, ask if they all feel comfortable with the arrangement. If not, they can continue. If they are comfortable, ask them to state the month and day of their births in order. A variation is to ask people to line-up by height, but do so with their eyes closed and humming all the time. When movement ends, ask if they all feel comfortable with the arrangement. If not, they can continue for a while. Finally, have them open their eyes and see how they’ve done. When doing this with eyes closed, facilitators keep participants safe by redirecting them should they wander near the edge of the room or into furniture.

## OWL AND MOUSE\*

Use two bandanas to cover eyes and two small plastic bottles filled with pebbles to use as rattles. The object is for the owl to catch the mouse, and for the mouse to elude the owl. Ask for two volunteers: one owl and one mouse. Put the bandanas over the eyes of both and give each a rattle. They are to shake the rattle so they can find (or elude) each other. The other participants are to form a protective circle around them so that they don’t hurt each other. When the owl catches the mouse, start again with two new volunteers, or make the mouse into the owl and get a new mouse.

## WAKING UP IN THE JUNGLE\*

Stand in a circle. Ask each person to pick out an animal noise. They then pretend to wake up, starting from silence, making their noises softly at first and with growing crescendo until they are yelling very loudly.

Items marked \* reprinted with permission from Alternatives to Violence Project’s Manual Basic Course (Revised02). For more dynamics and other nonviolence training tools: Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) \* PO Box 152 \* Blauvelt, NY USA 10913 \* (661) 886-1076

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