

# Sassy Facilitation

supporting cooperative communication

## Facilitation Games

games to use for facilitating process and having fun

**game:** a) activity engaged in for diversion or amusement  
b) a procedure or strategy for gaining an end

### Facilitator Pointers:

- 1) don't just explain, involve yourself in it – modeling personal investment in process invests others
- 2) encourage risk taking and model it appropriately – keep it challenging
- 3) keep rules to a minimum
- 4) bend the rules appropriately
- 5) don't run a good game into the ground – know when to move it along; conversely, know when to give up on a game and change your plans
- 6) keep the players playing – don't let people be 'out' for too long
- 7) pick fair teams/groups – don't let them self-segregate or fall into old 'comfort zones'
- 8) play games that are as gender/class etc equitable as possible – context dependent
- 9) emphasize competition against selves, not others (i.e. 'beat our best time', not 'beat them')
- 10) the fun of a game can be an end in itself – refrain from making every activity have a 'larger message'

*(these games are loosely categorized for reference only; they should be used and adapted whenever and wherever useful. some require SAFE SPACE to be in place before attempting, as noted)*

## Icebreaker/Name Games

### “How do you get around?”

arrange group into circle large enough for some movement  
each person states

- 1) their name and
- 2) mode of transportation that starts with the first letter of their name
- 3) an action or sound to correspond with his/her mode of transportation
- 4) everyone else's name/transportation/movement who came before

variation: animals, nickname

### “I'm coming to the Party and bringing.....”

group circles up. the facilitator starts by saying “my name is..... and I'm coming to the party and bringing (something that starts with the first letter of their name)” the next person says “that was (first person's name) and they are bringing (the object they named). my name is (their name) and I'm coming to the party and bringing .....etc. each successive person must name all those that have come before them – if they forget, they have to ask for help.

variations: name the party (is Sex party, Co-op work Party, Zombie Prom, Underwater Fantasy, Space Aliens etc; be mindful of the group's boundaries)

### “kiran's name ball game”



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## Physical Fun

### “The Line Up”

the facilitator asks the group to form a horizontal line without talking, in order of: height, birthday, shoe size, age, etc

variation: for advanced players, try eyes closed

### “BOP”

Everyone in a circle, keep the ball ‘alive’ a la hacky-sack, but with any body part. everyone counts each time the ball is hit, and you can’t hit it twice in a row. Group size: 10 or less

### “The Circle”

stand in a circle, all facing counterclockwise.

the 1st person begins to enact and narrate an activity (i.e., sits down to tie their shoe while telling you about their day.

everyone in the circle imitates the person *directly in front of them*, not the original leader.

the facilitator stands in the middle and calls next at their discretion, and the person behind them becomes it

### “Get Connected”

you need a hula hoop

the group forms a circle and introduces themselves to the people on their right and left. join hands, with the hula hoop over one arm. attempt to pass the hula hoop around the whole circle without breaking hands.

variations: add a decreasing time limit and do it 4-5 times; no talking and everyone blind; people touching the hula hoop blind, everyone else telling them what to do, etc

### “Triangulate”

Pick 2 people within a larger group (...in your head! Don’t announce it!)

Stay equidistant from each of them (i.e., in an equilateral triangle)

Try not to run into anyone.

### “Room Sized Scrabble”

Everyone in the room grabs a letter (you need scrabble letters)

You have 10 minutes to get into a word

Bonus – if you join all the words (ala a scrabble board)

### “Find a person with...”

the facilitator calls out “find a person with (some characteristic)” the group then scrambles to find a partner with that trait, and links arms

those left without partners are out

some sample traits: same eye color, brown hair, the same sign, lived in the same city, favorite cookie, height etc etc

alternative version – the out person (or people) get to call out the next trait; some guidelines should be established as to what are appropriate comments; that said, this can be used at different points in the training with different intents and confidentiality levels

### “Peanut Butter and Butterfly”



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everyone is given a compound word (like cupcake or waterfall) – one person is given ‘cup’ and another ‘cake’ etc. then they close their eyes and try to find their partner-word by sound only. once they find their partner, they link arms and stay silent.

variation: give compound words with overlapping parts (as in the title) and see what happens to the remainders – incorporate into a new layer/use as a transition to a new game; when partners find each other, have them introduce themselves and find something in common

## “Alternate Gordian Knot”

the group forms a circle.

everyone puts their right hand in and grabs another person’s hand. then they put in the left hand and grab another person’s hand. now everyone should be holding hands in a big knot

rules: you cannot grab the hands of the people next to you; you must grab the hands of two different people now, instead of slicing through this knot, co-operatively untangle it without breaking the thread ☺

## “Spirals”

group forms a circle and joins hands. the ‘leader’ breaks their left hand free only, and begins to walk around the circle, as the person they broke hands with stays in their spot. everyone holding hands follows along, forming a spiral around the stationary person. as the spiral gets tighter, the people in the center stop moving until the spiral is all wound up – stay outside people’s physical boundaries. the person in the center has to find a way out without disconnecting anyone’s hands – once they do so, they lead the group back into a circle.

## Trust Building

### “Pour your Weight”

Partnered and group physical trusting – no hands getup, contact improve, ‘wind in the willows’

### “touch someone on the back who”

### “Impulse”

the group forms a circle and holds hands.

the facilitator sends an impulse (hand squeeze) around the circle

variations: eyes closed; time it and do it a few times; do snaps, whistles, finger snaps, claps etc

### “Camera”

played in pairs

partners decide who is the camera and who is the photographer

the camera closes eyes, the photographer places hands on camera’s shoulders

photographer leads the camera (eyes closed) around the room and positions the camera and takes a picture by squeezing the camera’s shoulders

the camera quickly opens and closes his/her eyes – the collage ensues

camera and photographer take turns

### “Trust Walk”

Variation: imaginary trust walk

### “Affirmations web” - yarn



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## “Find the Laugh”

NOTE: ground rules about appropriate behavior should be laid before hand, as this can get threatening (i.e. no touching, heavy breathing, etc)

group stands in a circle, with one facilitator in the middle. play begins when the facilitator approaches a player in the circle and does everything possible to make them smile or laugh. Any player who laughs or smiles joins the facilitator and helps work on the rest of the stony faced players. play ends when hysteria reins.

## “Have you ever?”

the group forms a circle and marks their ‘spot’ with something recognizable (slips of paper work), leaving one person in the middle without a spot. that person asks “have you ever.....?” ending the question with something they have done. every person who answers yes – you have the right to pass – must move to another spot at least 2 spots away from their original spot. the last person left without a spot asks the next question.

## “Step Out”

NOTE: this is a SILENT activity, and should only be done once a SAFE SPACE has been established. the group forms a circle, including the facilitator, and holds hands. the facilitator then reads a list of ‘step out’ questions and directions. ex: “step out if you have ever felt alone. (pause) take a look around you. (pause) please step back. step out if you...” etc. when a person chooses to step out, they drop the hands of those in the circle, and take one step toward the center, where they pause, look around, and then rejoin the circle and hold hands again. the last question should be “step out if you could have stepped out for a question, but chose not to”.

variations: at the end of the activity, hold a brief guided meditation (on our oneness, on the connection of the community, honoring our common experiences and bravery in sharing them, etc); before and/or after this activity, do an “Impulse” activity.

## “Hugs”

NOTE: this is a SILENT activity, and should only be done once a SAFE SPACE has been established. in this activity, every person in the group will hug every single other person. the group of people being hugged is silent and still, with their eyes closed. the huggers approach the people in that group individually, and silently hugs them, holding on until they feel the impulse to let go. appropriate behavior, respect of personal boundaries, and maintaining silence is essential for allowing people to take risks in this intimate exercise.

logistics: the group is split up into an even number of groups and rotated until everyone has hugged everyone else; the facilitator participates, though must also keep the game moving and enforce the safe space.

ex: 40 people are split up into groups of 10

- 1) each group splits in half and hugs each other / reverse
- 2) the groups become whole again, and A hugs B while C hugs D / reverse
- 3) A hugs C while B hugs D / reverse
- 4) A + B becomes one group which hugs C + D / reverse

## “Hot Seat”

split the group into smaller ‘trust groups’. appoint a timekeeper with a second hand or a stopwatch. one person sits in the middle of the group and the group asks them questions continuously for 60 seconds. the person has a right to pass on any answer. after 60 seconds the next person gets into the ‘hot seat’ where they are questioned, etc.

## “In the Middle”



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split the group into small 'trust groups'. One participant is 'in the middle', and is silent. The other participants have roughly 2-5 minutes each to relate their first impression of, first experience with, and perhaps current relationship to the person 'in the middle'. After everyone has finished, the person 'in the middle' has 2-5 minutes to respond, while everyone else is silent. Rotate until everyone has gone.

## **"The Wall"**

split the group into small 'trust groups'. Each participant has 2-5 minutes to tell the group about their 'wall', to describe the front that they put up to the world, the nature of their armor, how and why they feel it came to be, and their current relationship to it. The other participants are silent, and do not respond during the activity. Rotate until everyone has gone.

## Conscious Learning Games

### **"Snowball"**

group writes anonymous responses to questions, crumpled up, thrown in the middle, redistributed and read aloud

some questions: What does it mean to be a facilitator? What makes a good facilitator? What are some qualities in a good facilitator, and how do you relate to these qualities and their practice? etc

### **"Listen and Respond"**

group pairs off. person one speaks non-stop for 2 minutes (if you have trouble filling the space, just keep saying words until your train of thought catches up) while their partner practices active listening. person 2 then relates back to person one what they heard. partners switch roles. group should think about: when is it important to express your opinion? when should you hold back? (do as a group debrief)

### **"Rhythm"**

Everyone starts clapping to a regular beat.

On the fourth beat, the first player says a word.

Four beats later, the next player says an associated word.

Anyone who falters, breaks the rhythm or says an odd word is out.

When everyone has spoken a word, repeat on every third beat, then every two, then every single beat.

Goal: making people cognizant of/comfortable with a pace and the rhythm of a process.

### **"Hidden Leaders"**

Players sit in a circle, facing in.

One person leaves the room and a leader is appointed.

S/he leads the players by performing certain movements, etc. which they follow.

Odd person returns and tries to guess who is the hidden leader.

Goals: realizing that there are hidden dominants in group processes and that finding them is the key; also think about how the hidden intricacies of familiar relationships look to an outsider coming in

