

Energizers and games for your event

In this educational material, we would like to introduce you to various Energizers and games that you can use when conducting a workshop, event or group meeting.

This material introduces Energizers, explains why you should use them, what you can expect from them, and gives you some examples of Energizers that work wonders. You will find guidance on when and how to use them, and most importantly, how to adapt them to your situation.

Although you can take this material and perform the Energizers as described, we encourage you at this point to consider these games in the context of your work. Whether it's a workshop, a multi-day event, or a meeting introducing new colleagues, you can adapt them to help you achieve your goals in any situation.

What are Energizers?

Energizers are quick, uncomplicated activities done in between more demanding tasks, or to get a group going when concentration or participation drop. Energizers can do much more, and there are many ways to use them.

Let's establish some standard criteria for any energizer

- a short period of time
- dynamic movement or speed of interaction
- pleasant and relaxing, but slightly challenging
- a cheerful, beneficial activity that restores or increases energy levels

These criteria are not set in stone, but serve as a guide to give you an idea of what to expect.

Why should we use them?

Have you ever been in a situation where everyone involved was struggling to get a discussion going or a task done? Instead, were they surviving off of caffeine, watching the clock and praying for it to end? If so, you know the answer. If not, you'd probably want to avoid it.

Sometimes activities, workshops, and meetings are much longer than our attention span, and we just can't focus for too long. However, we want our participants to pay attention for as long as possible, enjoy the program, and learn something. Therefore, we need to design programs so that those attending have the opportunity to fully participate. Fortunately, Energizers are an easy, not too time-consuming, and fun way to improve this situation.

It's always good to have participants attention, but we may want them to discuss and interact; sometimes that's not so easy. In these situations we can use an Energizer and have them talk about something that is enjoyable, and not challenging. It is always much easier to start a conversation with a neutral topic and then move on to a serious topic when the group is already talking.

Another reason could be that we are all born with different abilities and some of us do not have the ability to maintain attention for very long. Some have different needs, and their bodies are a bit more

alive than others; they need to move around from time to time. Energizers are a great way to work with these needs.

If you are working with a group of people with disabilities or a group with other needs, it is advisable to use an energizer, but adapt the number, length, or intensity to the group.

All of the activities listed can be adapted to your topic, needs, and work style. We have even added some examples and selected those that do not require special equipment, so that nothing will stand in your way.

When should you use them?

The obvious answer would be when you feel low energy in your group. However, you can also play with them, modify them and give them a new meaning.

For example, you can use Energizers when:

- You need to break up different blocks of activity or topics.
- You need to maintain your group's attention during the session and don't want to wait for it to wane.
- You have some free time and feel like doing a quick, fun activity.
- You need to introduce participants to each other.
- You need to deepen your group's bond.
- You need to conduct a quick survey.
- You need to prepare your group for a specific task.

... And much more. Just play around with these activities and include them in your program ahead of time to make sure you keep the good vibes going

However, there is another answer to "When should you use it?". When all your participants have the option not to participate. When you make fun mandatory, the magic disappears.

Energizers are also great for working with young people or people with disabilities or special needs. A group of people with ADHD, for example, may concentrate for much less time than you might anticipate. By adding a few Energizers to the program, they can harness their energy, get moving, and then regain focus.

Activities

1. Two Truths and a Lie

A simple game to boost participants' energy and give them a chance to get to know each other better. As well as being a perfect activity for introductory sessions, you'll be surprised how well it works in environments where people have known each other for years.

A group of people will work much better together if they form bonds with each other and have a sense of community. With this activity, you can create or deepen such bonds, and make work more enjoyable.

What you need:

A piece of paper and a pen for each participant.

What do we do in this exercise:

Ask each participant to write a total of three statements about themselves. One of the statements is true, and the others are false.

It may look like this:

*I am very skilled at playing the harp.
I am very enthusiastic about knitting.
I am very interested in growing houseplants.*

In this case, even long-time classmates or colleagues may not know the truth.

It may look like this:

*I'm an accountant by day, but at night I put on my superhero costume and fight crime.
I like to wear cactus plants in my socks.
I love my dog Pedro more than anything, and my favorite thing to do is take him for a walk in the woods and play catch with him.*

In this case it might be a bit more obvious, but again, you may be surprised :)

Let the participants decide how much they want to share about themselves and in what way. When everyone has finished their three statements, have them go around the room, and take turns having the others guess the one true statement about them.

If you want to motivate your audience even more, make it a contest! For example, you can promise a piece of candy, the last cup of coffee, or another prize to the person who guesses the greatest number of true statements.

2. What do we think about ...?

In this energizer you can work with a topic related to your session. In this case, you can encourage the group to focus on a specific topic and even conduct an opinion poll to find out more about their experiences!

Let's use Fake News as an example. However, be aware of delicate topics. In this energizer, all participants will reveal their stance on a certain topic in front of the rest of the group, so it is better not to ask sensitive questions.

If you need to ask sensitive questions, you should allow for an "I don't want to answer" option.

What you need:

Enough space and some questions, that's all.

What do we do in this activity?

To begin, think about some things your group might have in common. Instruct them to move around the room in a way that shows their opinions and mark one end of the room as "positive," i.e., I agree, I can relate, yes, I totally agree, etc., and the other end as "negative," i.e., I disagree, I can't relate, no, I don't agree at all. If we mentally combine these two poles into a scale, the middle will be neutral, and the closer to a particular pole, the more inclined the respondent is to that pole. This is subjective, of course, but it is also an Energizer, not an exact science.

To start, choose a question like "How are you doing?" and let people find their place in the room based on how they're feeling - if they're at the "negative" pole, it means they're having a crappy day, and conversely, at the "positive", it means they're having the time of their lives. If you feel like it, pick someone to explain their position - e.g., "What made you so happy today that you're at the positive end of the scale?"

Then you can move on to questions more closely related to your topic. Just make sure there is a way to answer them positively/negatively.

Here are some examples:

Do you have a family member or friend who regularly spreads false news?

Positive = Yes, several

Neutral = I am not aware of any

Negative = None

Do you think news stories posted on reputable websites do not need to be checked for fake news and misinformation?

Positive = Yes, I would not check them out

Neutral = I am unsure or have no opinion on this, or it depends on a case by case basis.

Negative = No, I would always check.

What do you think about citing sources in popular articles similar to citing sources in a scientific paper?

Positive = I think it's a good idea.

Neutral = I don't know; hard to say.

Negative = Absolutely not. Science and entertainment are different formats

With questions like these, you can do a quick poll of people about their opinions and experiences, and even ask why they're in that particular place.

You can even make it more interactive and allow participants to ask their own questions. Make sure you already have something prepared to get the energy going, show them the mechanism, and then let them take surveys amongst themselves.

The level of seriousness is up to you.

3. Gallery of Statues

If energy levels are dropping even after a few coffee breaks, try something different and get your participants moving a little.

In this activity, we'll get the creative juices flowing and move our bodies in a fun way.

The great thing about this is that unlike many other physical Energizers, this activity is suitable for participants with disabilities as it is up to them what statue they become!

What do you need?

Enough space and some music.

How do we do this activity?

Play music and instruct your participants to move loosely and freely around the room. The music should be pleasant but not sleepy, upbeat but not aggressive. Instruct your participants that at some point you will stop the music and call out a word. The word is the theme of the gallery, and as soon as the music stops, they become statues in the gallery that fit that theme (of course, they have some time to prepare).

For example: everyone moves, I stop the music and call out the word "love", and everyone lines up to become statues that fit the theme of "love". Someone just stood there forming a heart from their fingers, another person mimicked a hug and kiss, and two friends lined up, laid on the floor, and formed a heart from their bodies. What a beautiful gallery full of love! When you finish your tour of the gallery, let the music play again and repeat the process with different themes.

Since this is a physical activity, participation should be voluntary, taking into account participant abilities and needs. If someone decides not to participate, that's fine; just make sure you don't have five people making statues and twenty looking at them! That could make for an awkward environment.

Make sure not to gatekeep topics! Invite your participants to have a say in the theme of the gallery.

If you want to vary the theme and encourage group collaboration, create a unique gallery with statues of teams, not individuals. This way, your participants will work together to create a masterpiece. Make sure they engage in acrobatics only when they want to and can.

A final important point: choose an appropriate theme. Whether it is the theme of your session or a general topic, some topics are simply inappropriate for the gallery and can cause unnecessary discomfort or triggering.

4. What Do We Have in Common?

Sometimes it's easier to think about our differences than our similarities. With this activity, you can energize your group and bring them together by highlighting their commonalities.

This short and fun energizer can deepen your group's cohesion or serve as an introduction to a group activity.

What do you need.

Enough space to form a circle and some prepared questions.

How do we conduct this activity?

Ask all participants to form a circle in which they feel comfortable. The task is not to form a perfect circle; it is okay if someone needs more space around them.

Once the circle is formed, tell the participants that you will be making statements, and if they can answer "yes," have them take a step forward to the center of the circle. Then have them look around to see who is in the circle with them. Then they go back into the circle and the next question is asked. Most likely, your group will find out that there is more common ground than they thought, which could bond the group even more.

You can make some changes in this activity. It all depends on what you are saying.

If they are innocuous statements, such as "I am in a very good mood" or "I love my dog," you can do this activity as described and maybe even have participants formulate their own statements to ask the group.

If you want to relate the statements to your theme, it is good to think about your theme in terms of sensitivity and adapt it accordingly. When we used this exercise in a workshop on sex education, we were uncomfortable staring at each other and making statements about sexuality. Everyone closed their eyes, took a step or not, and only then opened their eyes. The result was a bonding moment without embarrassment that showed we had much more in common than we first thought.

Even if the topic isn't sensitive at all and your group is just chatting about pets and houseplants, make sure it's voluntary. If someone doesn't want to reveal their status, that's fine (maybe their beloved pet or plant has passed away and they're not ready to talk about it). Also, no one should reveal anything about anyone else - if a friend who knows me well informs me that I have a houseplant, and I might be embarrassed that I have way too many of them, and I don't want to make a move, that would put me in a difficult position.

5. Do not answer!

This activity may look trivial, but it's a great way to get participants engaged with each other. You can also tie it to your theme or make it as creative and imaginative as you like!

What do you need.

Just enough space to form a circle.

How do we conduct this activity?

Ask your participants to form a circle. One person begins by walking up to someone and asking a question, such as "What is your best personal characteristic?" but the person being asked does not answer. Instead, the person to their left answers the question on their behalf. They do not refer to themselves, but to what they think the person would answer or what they would say about the other person. Then the person who was asked tells the group what their answer would be. Then they switch places; if the answer is correct, the person to the left asks a new question; if not, the person who was asked before asks a new question.

Sound a bit chaotic? Don't worry, once the participants understand the system, the game is full of energy. Still, it's better if you make the logic clear to your group. For example, it might look like this:

Anna asks the question, *"What annoys you the most about working in a group?"* and she asks Simon. Simon is silent, and Barbara is sitting to his left.

Barbara thinks and after a few seconds answers, *"When the work is not shared equally,"* convinced that this is the right answer.

Simon laughs because it is the right answer and tells everyone, *"Yes, that's right; I hate it when someone doesn't do anything and the others have to work more for it."*

Anna, who asked the question, and Barbara have switched places, and now it's Barbara's turn because she gave the right answer.

...or so...

Barbara asks the question because she knew the answer correctly in the last round. She asks, *"What is your talent when working with a group on a project?"* and asks Josh.

Josh is silent while Stan stands to his left.

Stan is a little unsure and answers doubtfully, *"I think your greatest talent is being the creative mind of the group?"*

Josh bursts out laughing and says, *"Sorry, Stan, but that's wrong. I'm not creative at all. But what I can do, and consider my talent, is manage the work and make sure everything runs smoothly and gets done. Let's just say I'm very demanding and meticulous."*

Barbara and Josh switch places, and Josh asks a new question because Stan didn't answer correctly.

As you can see, it's not that hard once you get into the rhythm.

As with other activities, you can adapt it to your theme or purpose. As you can see in the example, we used it to explore the topic of group work. If you use this energizer before group work, it can help participants decide how to better form the groups. Not only can you use topic-related questions, such as Fake News, but you can also use work-related questions, or you can connect it to your event and ask questions about their experience, what they liked best, etc.

The choice of topic is up to you, but make sure your participants can decline the question being answered on their behalf. We may never know, but it's very easy to bring up something sensitive, even with innocent questions.

Sources

These Energizers are used by NESEHNUTÍ in their workshops and at their events and are modified depending on the topic. You can find different versions of them on the internet or in different guides and manuals.

This text is an original created for the Debate not Argue project.

Feel free to modify it according to your needs and give it a new twist!

Where is there more to see?

100 ways to energize groups: games to use in workshops, meetings, and the community by International HIV/AIDS Alliance.

Available from: <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Energisers.pdf>

If you need hundreds of Energizers, here are exactly 100 with a brief description! Great inspiration when you need to find something fast.

Games and Energizers for your workshop from Change Agency

Available at: <https://commonslibrary.org/games-and-energisers/>

Make your workshop a little more interactive with these games and Energizers. You'll find activities suitable for opening the workshop, name games, or some fun ways to divide participants into groups. All activities are well explained.

Toolbox for training by SALTO

Available at: <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/>

A handy tool if you are looking for different activities. It serves as a database where you can sort, download and use activities, methods and toolkits! Just select the type of activity or manual you are looking for and you will get different options.