

Group Process Activity

<p>Overview</p>	<p>This collection of activities provides a selection of vetted exercises that will assist instructors and students in developing group cohesion, thoughtful engagement, and reflective responses to challenging material.</p> <p>The activities are divided into four types: Icebreakers, Group Maintenance, Dialogue Starters, and Reflection.</p>
<p>Goals</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To provide instructors with a variety of activities that can be used at any point during the term. 2) To give numerous examples of the types of activities that will help instructors build an inclusive classroom with their students.
<p>Implementation</p>	<p>These activities should be implemented throughout the term to achieve the best results. Instructors can use their best judgment for when in the term a particular activity will be most useful. For example, some activities may require more vulnerability from students, and the instructor will need to gauge when the students are prepared to be vulnerable with one another.</p> <p>The activities are divided into four types: Icebreakers, Group Maintenance, Dialogue Starters, and Reflection.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) While some of these activities can be done in the spur of the moment, many of them require supplies and preparation. You may need to do some planning to make full use of the list. 2) Several of the prompts listed require students to be open and vulnerable, and particular discussion topics may be more sensitive to some students than others. Be aware of how comfortable your students are with the topic and with one another to determine if an activity is appropriate.
<p>Materials</p>	<p>Vary by activity.</p>
<p>Citations</p>	<p>Adapted for use by InciteChange! Consulting.</p>

Group Process Activities

Icebreakers

When used often, icebreakers can encourage students to participate more in discussions by prompting them to speak in response to low stakes prompts and can foster the development of an inclusive environment as students get to know one another.

Activity	Description
Pose a Question	Select a question (i.e., Where have your shoes been?) or give two options for participants to select from. In either a go-around (consecutively around the circle) or popcorn (whatever order participants want to share), ask participants to share their answers.
Name Games	There are so many fun name games intended to provide mnemonics or other interesting ways to learn and remember names. For example, "My name is Frankie, and I am frenetic!"
Beach Ball	Write introduction-based questions all over a beach ball. Toss this beach ball around a circle; when someone catches it, they answer the question that their right thumb is closest to. (This can also be used as a dialogue or reflection activity if used with different questions).
Reflection Prompts – Chiji Cards or Charms	Lay chiji cards (pictures), charms, objects, etc. out on a surface and ask participants to select one that reflects their response to a prompt. Example prompts are: Select one item that symbolizes your communication style.
Hopes/Fears	Pass out one index card to each participant. On one side, ask them to write a Hope and on the other side a Fear. Collect these, shuffle them, and redistribute them to the group. Ask participants to read all fears out loud, noting any trends/patterns. Ask participants to read all hopes out loud, noting any trends/patterns.
Concentric Circles	Form two concentric circles of people, where each person from the inside circle is matched with a person from the outside circle. Provide participants a prompt to discuss briefly in pairs. After the designated time (usually about 2 minutes), ask one of the circles to rotate so everyone has a new partner. Give them a new prompt to discuss.
Mingle Mingle	Option A: Ask everyone to get into pairs to discuss a provided prompt. After the allotted time, ask them to find a new partner to discuss the next provided prompt. Option B: Ask everyone to get into pairs to discuss a provided prompt. After they share their answer, they should find a new partner to share their answer with and continue doing this until the time is up. This can be repeated with new prompts as much as desired.

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Group Maintenance

Group maintenance processing activities such as these are intended to build an engaging, respectful, and empathetic climate in the classroom.

Activity	Description
Create Guidelines	At the beginning of a group's experience together, it is advisable to create guidelines (or agreements) together, listing commitments of how they will engage with each other throughout their time. Review the Discussion Guidelines resource guide for examples.
Refer to Guidelines	Using the guidelines created in the above activity, a facilitator can always refer to these to simply check-in on how a group is doing or to remind a group of an expectation that is not being met. Facilitators can invite participants to renegotiate guidelines.
Go-Around: Everyone Shares	Facilitators can provide a prompt for everyone to respond to and ask participants to share their thoughts consecutively around the circle.
One Word Go-Around	This is a form of go-around where each participant only states a one-word response. This activity is often used to get a quick pulse on how a group is doing after a long or heated conversation.
Thumbs/Fist-to-Five	<p>There are many ways to do a quick poll with a group. Depending on the poll question, it may make sense to ask participants to close their eyes. For example, if a facilitator is trying to determine if people feel safe continuing the conversation, they can ask everyone to close their eyes and indicate a thumb up if they wish to continue, thumb to the side if they are indifferent, or a thumb down if they feel unsafe continuing.</p> <p>The Fist to Five variation asks participants indicate their response to a question with a selected number of fingers. For example, a facilitator could ask: How interested are you in continuing this conversation (5 fingers for very, 1 for not at all)? Note – Be aware of the ability of the participants in the group to know if everyone has the physical dexterity to show thumbs or fingers.</p>
5-Minute Perspective Challenge	This is especially helpful when participants are experiencing Groupthink – all sharing the same perspective. A facilitator would ask the group to continue the conversation as a role-play for 5 minutes where they cannot say anything that echoes this agreed-upon perspective. They are to try to consider as many different perspectives as possible in this role play. At the end of the 5 minutes, the facilitator can ask questions such as: “Were there any new perspectives that came up that you think have merit?” or “Did you find yourself agreeing with any of these new perspectives?”

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Dialogue Starters

These activities are designed to encourage productive engagement from students on topics that may be uncomfortable or unfamiliar to them.

Activity	Description
Middle Bowl	Pass out index cards to everyone in the group, asking them to write questions or comments related to a facilitator-designated topic. If they do not have any questions/comments, they should leave the card blank. All cards (written on or blank) should be folded in half and placed in a bowl in the middle. One at a time, a participant should pull a card out and read it out loud. (If blank, they will pull another until they get one with writing.) They do not personally have to respond to the comment. Rather, the group will reflect on it through conversation for a few minutes. The process repeats with a different participant reading another card. This activity is great for soliciting perspectives that participants hold but are reluctant to share verbally with the group.
Role Play	When a group is strategizing an action, role-play is a great way to ask them to try out their actions. By practicing in this group setting first, they are more likely to be successful in other settings.
Gallery	Either by using group-generated content (like posters made in small groups) or predesigned content (like photos brought by facilitators), post these items up on the walls and ask participants to silently look at/read them. This is usually followed by a small or large group debrief about their observations and/or reactions.
World Cafe	<p>Option A: Get participants into groups the size of the closest square root to the total number of participants (for example – 4 groups of 4 if 16 participants, 3 groups of 3 if 9 participants). Ask all participants to discuss the same prompt, taking notes on their conversation. When the designated time is up, the notes will remain in place and all participants will move to other circles, so they are spread out as much as possible. Groups should review the notes at their new station and a new prompt for conversation is provided. Notes should be taken so there is an archive of the conversation. The process repeats for the desired number of rotations.</p> <p>Option B: This option is very similar to the first option except that not all participants are given the same prompt at the same time. Instead, each cluster has a different prompt, so all participants will discuss each prompt but in different orders from each other.</p>
Continuum Lines	Ask participants to line up according to facilitator prompts. For example: Form a continuum based on how (un)comfortable you were during the service project today (very comfortable on this side to very uncomfortable on this side).

Word Associations	Provide participants with a word or phrase and ask them for any associations (anything that comes to their mind), regardless of if they personally agree with the comment or not. Write all the associations up on a board or newsprint.
Pair Share	To offer variety from large group discussion and allow people to possibly share more personal comments, facilitators can offer time for people to chat in a pair on a designated topic. Sometimes, it is appropriate for pairs to report out on aspects of their conversations.
Select a Question	The facilitator brings a set of index cards, each with a different question, all related to the same topic. Ask participants to get into the number groups that there are index cards. Each group selects a card at random and that becomes their conversation prompt. Facilitators will need to synthesize the conversation in the large group afterward so that everyone has the benefit of each prompt.
Move in/Move Out	Form a circle as a group. Read a series of statements (about experiences/perspectives) to the group, pausing after each one to ask participants whose experience/perspective matches to move into the circle. After a few seconds, ask those participants to move back out and read the next statement. This process repeats for a determined number of statements.
Indicate If...	Ask participants to indicate (by show of hands or otherwise) if a prompt pertains to them. Read a series of statements (about experiences/perspectives) to the group, pausing after each one to ask participants to indicate if their experience/perspective matches.
Create A Picture	Ask participants to create a scene using each other as people in the scene and any props that are around and may be helpful. This is useful when beginning a role-play activity and can also be used alone to create “photos” or different experiences participants have had.
Storytelling	Ask participants in small groups to share personal experiences related to a given prompt.
Take A Stance	Designate the four corners of a room, each with one of the following stances (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Read a statement to the group that participants may disagree on and ask them to take a stance – move to the corner that best reflects their opinion. They need to move to a corner, not in between. After processing the responses, the process can repeat through the series of selected statements.

Group Process Activities

Reflection

These reflection activities encourage thoughtful introspective responses that recognize learning as a process that is both individual and communal.

Activity	Description
Yarn Reflection	<p>The facilitator is prepared with a ball of yarn and asks participants to form a circle. A prompt is given (such as: what is one thing you are taking from this conversation?) and whoever wants to share raises their hand so the ball can be tossed to them. After they share their comment, they hold onto a part of the yarn so it is taut and throw it to whoever would like to speak next. This process continues until there is a web of connections between all the participants.</p> <p>Facilitators can prompt for symbols/metaphors in the web. If desired, participants can cut a piece of the yarn to wear as a bracelet, serving as a reminder of the conversation. Note – This activity requires a significant level of physical ability; only select this activity if it will be a good fit for your group physically.</p>
Artifact Sharing	<p>Ask participants to come prepared with artifacts to share, pertaining to a given prompt. For example – Bring an artifact that reflects an aspect of your identity or bring an artifact that serves as a metaphor for what inspires you.</p>
Guided Imagery	<p>Ask participants to recall their experience of a certain moment through all senses (the smells, sounds, feelings in their body, sights, etc.). This is usually most effective with eyes closed and with long silences so participants can re-center themselves back to that moment.</p>
Written Reflection	<p>Either with a designated prompt or as an open reflection, ask participants to take some time to write about what is on their mind. After a day full of emotions, this can be a healthy way to process that range of feelings.</p>
Index Cards Redistribution	<p>Pass out one index card to each participant. Ask them to write on the card, responding to a facilitator prompt. No names should be written. Collect these, shuffle them, and redistribute them to the group. Ask participants to read them out loud and have a discussion based on the responses.</p>
Roses/Thorns	<p>Ask participants to share one high (rose) and one low (thorn) from a shared experience. This can be done either in a go-around (consecutive around the circle) or popcorn (organic in whatever order) style share-out.</p>