

Ideas for Physical Activity Breaks at Meetings

My Bonnie

Size of group: ANY

Props needed: NONE

Room layout: ANY

Activity level: MODERATE

This is an exercise to raise the group's energy and attention. The group must sing the following song, and for every "O" in the song, they must either sit down or stand up. The song is :

my bOnnie lies Over the Ocean,
my bOnnie lies Over the sea,
my bOnnie lies Over the Ocean
sO bring back my bOnnie tO me,
bring back bring back, Oh bring back my bOnnie tO me.

Repeat as many as three times, going faster each time. You can also do this with the "B"s rather than the "O"s. Other songs can be used.

Vacation Stretch Break

Size of group: ANY

Props: NONE

Room layout: ANY

Activity level: LOW

This is a quick stretch. Have everyone stand up. They stretch upward. Roll their heads slowly from side to side. Put hands on hips and bend to the right and then to the left. Return to center.

With the right hand still on the hip, use the elbow to "write" the name of a place you would like to take a vacation.

With the left hand still on the hip, use the elbow to "write" the name of the person you would like to vacation with.

Stretching up with both arms to the sky, reach up and grab the money, and time to go there.

Rainstorm

Size of group: Works best with at least 20 – 30 people

Props: NONE

Room layout: ANY Can be adapted for a circle, tables or an auditorium set up

Activity level: LOW

This one helps everyone feel refreshed. The facilitator asks the participants not to talk and to listen to the rain coming over the forest.

Like a wave at a sports game, each person copies the person on the right. The facilitator starts, rubbing his/her hands together.

Everyone should imitate the person on their right. The facilitator completes in this order:

- Lightly rubbing your hands together
- Lightly clapping (or snapping)
- Third time slap your thighs,
- Fourth time slap thighs and stamp feet,
- Fifth time return to just slapping your thighs,
- The sixth time, back to clapping hands (or snapping)
- The seventh time back to rubbing your hands and
- Finally turn in silence. The rainstorm is over.

Clean Up Your Room

Size of group: 8 – 30 or so

Props needed: Soft objects to throw – at least one per participant and a way to mark 2 halves area used for the activity

Room layout: Central open space

Activity level: HIGH

Form two groups facing one another in a line.

Draw an imaginary line in the center.

Give each person at least one soft object to throw.

Explain the imaginary line is the center of the room and they are responsible for keeping their side of the room clean by throwing all objects to the other side.

When the sound is made time is up and the side with the “cleanest room” wins.

On the Ball

Size of group: 8 – 20 or so

Props: 3 – 6 soft balls (various sizes and shapes) or rolled up socks

Room layout: Place to stand in large circle

Activity level: MODERATE

This one energizes the room and gets everyone laughing. Side benefit –folks can learn each other's names.

First get everyone to raise one hand. Tell everyone that all that they need to remember is who they got the ball from and who they threw it to. (You can have everyone stand in a circle, if you prefer)

Then throw the ball to someone who has raised their hand, and have them do the same until everyone has been passed the ball. They can call out the person's name to get their attention.

When the last person has received the ball, have him/her throw it back to the facilitator who started it.

Repeat the pattern a number of times with one ball and then slowly introduce the other ones.

End the exercise by slowly taking the balls out of circulation.

Shake Down

Size of group: ANY

Props: NONE

Room layout: ANY

Activity level: MODERATE

This can be done sitting or standing, preferably standing.

Have the participants raise their hands in the air.

Begin by shaking the right hand 10 times.

Next, shake the left hand 10 times, the right foot 10 times, and the left foot 10 times. Instruct them to count out loud as they do it.

Repeat cycle for 9 shakes, 8 shakes, etc. counting down to zero with each hand and foot.

It is also fun to speed up the counting as the numbers go down.

What Are You Doing?

Size of group: 2 - 15

Props: NONE

Room layout: Place to stand in a circle to see each other

Activity level: LOW

NOTE: With 4 or more people, stand in a circle.

First person begins miming activity.

Second person asks first person "What are you doing?"

First person continues doing the same activity BUT says they are doing something totally different. (e.g. – they may be pretending to comb their hair, but when they respond they say they are dancing)

The second person starts miming the action the first person SAID (first person can stop now). The next person asks second person: "What are you doing"? Second person continues to do the same activity they started but says they are doing something totally different from that activity.

The next person then starts miming this new activity.

Continue until group gets tired of it or starts running out of ideas

Rules – no repeating activities and no stopping to think about activities –keep it moving!

Everything's Ducky

Size of group: ANY

Props: Objects that can balance on someone's head – one per person

Room layout: Ability to walk around tables or in a large open space

Activity level: MODERATE

Everyone puts object on their heads – such as a beanbag, or inverted bowl. People walk like a duck, knees bent, arms flapping and quacking.

Most either go around a circle or cross a room without object falling off heads. When object falls, someone else must rescue it. No one can put the object back on their own head.

Finish when everyone completes the circle or crosses the room successfully with object still on head.

Balloon Activities

Size of group: ANY

Props: 1 balloon/person

Room layout: central open space

Activity level: MODERATE

With a partner – standing 4 feet apart - toss a balloon back and forth

Take a step back and continue tossing the balloon

Take another step back and keep tossing the balloon

Come in closer and try tossing 2 balloons at once

Combine pairs so 3 or 4 people toss, two or more balloons

With a partner – place balloon between hips and try walking

Place balloon between backs and trying walking

Making a train – with balloons between each person and try walking

As a large group - keep as many balloons in the air as possible

Balloon Stamp

Size of group: ANY

Props: 1 balloon/person, string for tying balloon around ankle, boom box or anything that will play music, music

Room layout: central open space

Activity level: HIGH

Everyone must take a balloon with a string.

Tie the balloon around your right ankle.

When the music begins to play, begin moving around the room.

Go to other players and try to step on and pop their balloon, at the same time avoid others from popping your balloon.

Once player's balloon has been popped the player must leave the circle and cheer on all other players.

The last person standing with an un-popped balloon is the winner.

Mirror Activity

Size of group: ANY

Props: NONE

Room layout: ANY

Activity level: LOW to MODERATE

Pair up with a partner. Decide which of you will be the “lead” or the actor, and which will be the “mirror”. The lead will mime a series of actions, and the mirror will try to do exactly what the lead does. (Demonstrate with someone.) What are your questions?

1. First we are going to wash your car:
 - Start by collecting all the materials you will need: the bucket, a brush, some soap, some rags, and set them down by the car.
 - Now, pull out the hose...go to the tap, and turn it on.
 - Fill up the bucket w/water and add soap.
 - Spray water over the entire car – the front, the left side, the right side, the back, the hubcabs, the grill.
 - Now brush soapy water, all over car – get it good and clean... (try not to get soap in your eyes).
 - Rinse the car thoroughly with the hose.
 - Would you like to clean the windshields?
 - Did you miss anything?
 - Stand back and admire your clean car!

Now, switch roles, and the person who was the “mirror” will be the “leader” and the partner will be the follower

2. Imagine that you are about to change a baby’s diaper.
 - Pick up the baby and carry her to the changing table.
 - Get the clean diaper, wipes, new outfit, and whatever else you need.
 - Now undress baby.
 - Undo baby’s diaper and dispose of it. (How dirty was it?)
 - Clean baby’s diaper area thoroughly – throw out wipes.
 - Grab the clean diaper and put it on.
 - Dress baby in clean outfit.
 - Pick up baby – and then - guess what? Baby needs to be changed again!

In the River on the Bank

Size of group: ANY

Prop: a rope or string to separate two sides of the floor

Room layout: Central open space

Activity level: MODERATE

One side of the room will be the river and the other will be the bank.

There will be one person that calls out "River" or "Bank."

All participants will stand on the rope in the beginning.

When river is called out all must be on the river side of the floor, when bank is called out all must be on the bank side of the floor.

Any persons on the opposite side of the calling will be out of the game.

This will continue until one person is left standing.

Dance to the Music – Kid's or Adult's

Size of group: ANY

Props: Appropriate music (Hokey Pokey; Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes; Chicken Dance – or Cha Cha Slide)

Room layout: Enough room for people to move around in place

Activity level: MODERATE

For the first two songs - simply follow the instructions in the lyrics.

Chicken dance is another good dance. The steps are:

1. Fingers and thumbs open and close four times.
2. Flap arms four times.
3. Shake bottom back and forth four times.
4. Clap four times. Arm swings with a partner

Sources of children's music: Raffi; Greg and Steve; Music for Little People.

A good tune that's more adult-oriented is Cha-Cha Slide (available on Amazon.com). Again – simply follow the instructions in the song.

The Great Wind Blows

Size of group: 8 – 30 or so

Props: NONE

Room layout: Chairs arranged in circle

Activity level: HIGH

-A fun icebreaker and energizer. Ask each participant to sit in one of the chairs. There should be enough chairs for everyone. Tell the participants if they agree with your statement, they should stand up and move to another chair.

Stand in the center of the circle. And say “My name is _____ and the great wind blows for everybody who...” “Choose an ending that would apply to nearly everyone in the group, such as “likes ice cream” or “enjoys being hugged.”

At this point, everyone who likes ice cream gets up and runs to an empty chair. As the participants move, make sure you occupy one of the empty seats. Therefore, one participant will have no seat to occupy and will replace you as the person in the center.

Have the new person in the center finish the same incomplete sentence, “My name is ____ and the great wind blows for everybody who...” with a new ending. It can be humorous (sleeps with a night light) or serious (is worried about the federal deficit).

Play the game as often as seems right to get everyone energized. You can prepare a list in advance if you like and make the material relevant to the topic. Or you can have pairs in the center instead of just one.

Follow the Leader: Animal Version

Size of group: 8 – 30 or 40

Props: Music is recommended

Room layout: Ability to walk around large open space or the perimeter of a room

Activity level: MODERATE

Leader calls out the name of an animal and starts walking in the fashion of this animal. Participants follow.

After one pass around the room let someone else choose an animal and lead the group.

Variation – The leader can do any movements, not necessarily related to an animal.

Beans

Size of group: ANY

Props: NONE

Room layout: Enough room for people to move around in place

Activity level: MODERATE

An activity for a group not afraid to get moving. The participants stand up and make a little room around them to move. The facilitator calls out names of beans and the participants do set actions to them.

Baked beans - make a small shape with your body

Broad beans - make a wide, stretched out shape

String beans - make a tall string like shape

Jumping beans - jump up and down (sometimes I say 'small jumping beans' for small jumps and 'big jumping beans' for the opposite)

Runner beans - run on the spot

Chili beans - shiver and shake as if it was cold

Jelly beans - wobble and shake like jelly (or jello)

French beans - do the can-can, high kicks

Vegetable Soup

Size of group: 8 – 30 or so

Props: NONE

Room layout: Chairs arranged in circle

Activity level: HIGH

-A nutrition version of musical chairs. Make sure there are just enough seats in the circle for everyone except you.

Assign names of vegetables on a list you have made (e.g. tomatoes, carrots, onions, potatoes) in such a way that there are at least three people having the name of each fruit or vegetable. Then call out one food and those having that name swap seats. The leader also tries to get a seat.

The person without a seat calls out the next vegetable.

If s/he calls "Vegetable Soup" then everyone must change seats.

You can use characteristics of the vegetable – such as by color, shape, flavor, texture, etc.

Can vary this with a "Fruit Basket."

Ha Ha

Size of group: 8-15 or so

Props: NONE

Room layout: Stand in a circle or around a table

Activity level: MODERATE

This is more a revitalizer than a fitness break.

The facilitator tells the group the object of this game is to pass the word "ha" around the circle, without laughing. The first person says Ha. The next Ha Ha. The third says three Ha's. And so until the Ha Has are so numerous everyone laughs.

Fit WIC Activities

Size of group: ANY

Props: Soft objects like a ball, bean bag, yarn ball, sponge ball - One per pair of participants.

Room layout: Stand in a circle or around a table

Activity level: MODERATE

Individually:

Balance-Ask them to balance the object on their shoulder, elbow, back of hand, foot and walk in circle. Try the other shoulder and go the other direction.

Locomotor-Jump forward over the object. Turn around, jump over it again. Gallop around, skip around, side slide around.

Toss and Catch-toss at low, medium, high and catch each time. Toss, clap one or two times and catch again.

Partner Activities--One object to share.

Twist and Turn. Stand back to back with partner. Turn to one side and pass your object to your partner, continue passing by twisting and turning from side to side. Change direction.

Bend and Stretch-Back to back with a step's distance between. Pass object over head, exchange to partner's hands, and then bend over and pass the object between the legs. Continue bending and stretching with the object being exchanged.