Getting to Know One Another

If your group is new and you're going to spend some weeks or longer working together, then spend time getting to know one another. You may want to have a meeting, or a section of every meeting, dedicated to this at the start of your team journey. This will lay a strong foundation for the work you will do regarding the remit and operation of the group, like its purpose, goals and roles, and will make your team effective at collaborating, supporting each other and establishing boundaries.

Teams need to be able to work together in adaptable and flexible ways, giving members opportunities to step outside of old habits and established comfort zones to refresh their thinking, and to create new initiatives, and solutions for emerging problems. They need to support people in taking on new responsibilities, whilst enabling them to learn. Such teamwork is vital if we are to respond to, and remain adaptable in the face of the crises we are currently facing. However, it is difficult to build teams like this and to provide the conditions in which all team members can thrive, without first understanding the strengths, vulnerabilities and aspirations of those within the teams. And for this, trust needs to be developed. This guide contains suggestions on how to create a team rooted in trust and connection.

Names

Names are fundamental to identity, to knowing one another. To help people remember each other's names, either provide sticky labels for people to write their names on, if in person, or ask people to display the name they want to be known by on their zoom name display.

Some people have great difficulty in remembering names, or others might have the same name, so using tags can make the process easier. You might ask people to include the following alongside their name:

- Name
- Where you are from
- A personal description to add as a tag, which changes on subsequent weeks e.g. Bethan could name herself as 'Bethan Cardiff pink hair' on week 1 and on week 2, 'Bethan Cardiff wild pony rider'.

If you are using zoom, these are the names that will appear in the chat when people use it, so if people save chat contents at the end of the meeting, there will be distinctive reminders to help them relate comments to people.

Over time, when people know one another the names they choose to use can be playfully altered. You might for example, ask people:

- 'If your name were to match your mood, how would you like to be known today?'
- 'What name would you have given yourself in childhood if you had had a choice?'
- 'What name captures the superhero within?'

Another way to help people connect through their names is by giving them the following prompts and inviting people, in turn, to share what they feel comfortable sharing:

- *I was given my name because . . .*
- *I like / I dislike my name because . . .*
- *My name is / isn't a good fit for my personality because . . .*
- *People assume _____ about me because of my name . . .*

Check-ins and Check-outs

Check-ins and Check-outs are good opportunities for asking questions to help group members get to know one another. The types of questions that you ask in check-in may be different to those you ask in a check-out.

Check-in:

Consider asking questions that will bring the people into the present and help them process any high or lows on their minds. Most people don't get enough attention to process these in their life, so to provide that space will help the group bond.

Consider using questions that bring out the positive and difficulties in people's lives:

Plus:

- What's been good since we last met?
- What's going well in your life?
- Which three words would you use to describe good things in your life right now?
- What's one reason for being pleased to be here today?
- What are you looking forward to in this meeting?

Minus:

- What's been hard recently?
- What are you struggling with in life /right now?
- Which three words would you use to describe tough things in your life right now?

When a group is starting out in its first months, you may want to ask check-in questions like these in the full group. When the members of the group know one another better, these check in questions can be shared in breakout groups of 3-4 to do longer check-ins without taking up more overall time.

Ask the group if members need to know where everyone is at, or whether the group just needs time to arrive, to get into the present. If the former, then do the check in with the entire group. If the latter, then use breakout groups.

Check-out:

Focus the questions on helping people close the meeting and go back out into their lives.

Consider using one or a mix of following questions:

- What did you enjoy about today's meeting?
- What are you taking away with you from today's meeting (an idea, an action, some personal exploration, gratitude)?
- Who are you looking forward to being with next week, and why?
- What are you looking forward to doing next week, and why?
- What interesting challenges do you have ahead or would you like to take on?
- What will you remember to appreciate about yourself as you go about your business next week?

Icebreaker Suggestions

An icebreaker is a game that is literally used 'to break the ice'. They can take any form, but the idea is that they all help to give each other a fuller, more rounded view of the people you're working with. .

Curiosity Questions

- What was one of the best years in your life, and why?

- What type of foods do you like? What's a favourite meal?

- What songs do you like, and when do you sing?

- What's a film that you saw some time ago that had an impact on you?

- What is your favourite colour, and why?

- If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?

- What's a job that you've had that you really enjoyed, and why?

- What's your favourite city? Use 5 words to describe it

- When did you go on a really interesting walk? Where to? What was interesting?

- What did you love to do as a ten year old?

- What's one skill you're good at and one skill you'd like to develop?

- What's your favourite dance? Show us a few movements

- Who is a living person that you admire and two reasons why?

- What's your favourite animal? Demonstrate the sounds they make

- What's a memorable book from childhood? What enthralled you?

Games

In a virtual setting it's very difficult to do the many kinds of physical games that are possible when people are physically together, but thinking about moving to releasing physical tensions is important for virtual meetings, and when you can combine them with something silly, they can be lighthearted and fun.

Bingo

Someone is selected to start off as the bingo caller. They think of something they've done recently like 'eaten too much sugar' (it's got to be true of them). They ask the team - 'Has anyone eaten too much sugar recently? ' to raise a hand in the zoom REACT selection (bottom bar) if it's true of them too. Notice who hasn't raised their hand and select one of them to be the next bingo caller. If everyone lifts up their hands, then the bingo caller has another turn.

The bingo caller can ask for broad categories:

- Past experiences
- Interests
- Clothing
- Food
- Background / Family
- Dreams

Two Truths and One Lie

Everyone writes 3 statements in the chat, two of them are true and one of them is a lie. Someone keeps a tally and everyone gets to vote on which is the lie. People then reveal in turn what is the lie.

Name - Place - Animal - Thing

Someone starts and chooses the name of a river (they say e.g.Thames), the same person then allocates Place or Animal or Thing to everyone else in the team. They then must come up with a list of whatever they were allotted (Places or Animals or Things) that begin with the letters T H A M E S. show they've completed with the Hand Up REACTION on screen. The person who selected the name decides when everyone has finished whether it is the first or last Hand Up that is the winner.

They then ask the Winner for the name of a e.g flower. The winner then allocates Place or Animal or Thing to everyone else in the team with the letters of that flower. And so the game continues.

Designing Your Own Virtual Ice Breaker

Consider these factors before choosing your virtual ice breaker:

- **Establish a purpose:** Ask yourself, what 'ice' do you want to break? Are you simply introducing people to one another for the first time? Are you bringing people together from different parts of the neighbourhood, or people who have different cultures and backgrounds? You'll need to handle these differences sensitively and make sure that everyone can easily understand and get involved in the ice breaker.

- **Define your goals and objectives:** Do you want people to learn more about one another? Or is your objective more complex? For instance, do you want to encourage people to think creatively or to solve a particular problem?

- **Help people feel comfortable:** Your ice breaker will only be successful if everyone feels able to participate. So think about whether there are any obstacles that could hinder this, such as differences in language or culture. Steer clear of activities that might inadvertently cause offence. Bear in mind that information can often get 'lost in translation' and that jokes and humour don't always travel well.

- **Take time into account:** Do you want your ice breaker to be a quick five-minute activity or something more substantial? Take into account your purpose and objectives, and whether your gathering will have people calling from different time zones.

- **Choose your frequency:** Do you want your ice-breaker to be a quick activity at the start of each meeting immediately after Checkin? Will you change your ice breaker every time you do it? Will the same person always take the lead or will you rotate on who gets to pick and lead the activity each meeting (if you decide on that frequency)?

- **Consider technology:** If doing an ice-breaker on zoom, remember that some people are "camera shy," and/or have poor internet connection or may not have the right technology. If this is the case, you might want to choose an ice-breaker that doesn't rely on people being able to see each other.

- **Taking the lead:** One way to get people involved is to ask them to take lead on choosing the icebreaker/checkin/checkout.

- **Prepare in advance:** Decide how much information you'll need to provide your participants with beforehand. Do they, for example, need to bring a prop to the meeting?

A Note on Group Size and Bonding

Group size makes a difference to bonding and building trust. Breaking into small groups is useful for people to get to know one another in more depth. Once a group has 8 people, then consider splitting it into breakout groups for some activities. This is important for people who find large groups difficult (9 is a large group for some people); sma;er groups can help people build confidence in speaking.

Dividing people into smaller groups regularly will help people to get to know each other faster, especially if the breakout groups are randomly assigned, creating different groups each time. As the group continues to meet you can vary the size of the breakout groups and make them bigger, although bigger than 5 will take up time and be more difficult for people to relate to and learn from each other.