

## **ATTENTION SEEKERS**

I first wrote about the idea of Attention Seekers under, “May I have Your Attention Please” in the book, *The More The Merrier: Lead Playful Activities with Large Groups*” (Sikes, Evans, & Cavert, 2007 – go to [DoingWorks.com](http://DoingWorks.com) to get your copy).

### **Facilitation Tool**

#### Objective

Gain the attention of your group in fun and energetic ways (other than blowing a whistle).

## **FACILITATED OBJECTIVE:**

Bring the group together (especially a large group) after an activity in order to move into the next part of the program (e.g., processing discussion and/or provide information about the next activity).

## **NEEDS & NUMBERS:**

For most of the Attention Seekers below you don't need any props. Some are propped-based – see the Procedure section below for specific needs. These Seekers work with any size group.

## **TIME:**

Hardly any time at all – 20 to 30 seconds.

## **PROCEDURE:**

Attention Seekers are basically sounds – verbal or musical – that bring a group into focus for something you want to share with them. A Seeker (for short), can be used at the end of an activity, after a break to gather participants back together, or they can be used to pull a disjointed group back into focus at any time during a program.

At the beginning of a program you will want to teach your group what you will be using to get their attention. It is important to tell them that the Seeker is meant to be a fun way to get everyone together for some important information. It might be to talk through an activity or it might be to present the directions for the next activity. You want to let them know what to expect so they can participate with full understanding.

If I am running a short two or three hour program I might use two different Attentions Seekers. I'll introduce one at first, use it a few times then teach another one (choosing a second Seeker to match the “energy” of the group). Then I'll switch back-and-forth between the two for the remainder of the program. If I have a longer program I may teach a third Seeker half way through our time together and alternate between the three for the remainder of the program.

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Choosing a Seeker is more art than science. If you're not sure what sort of energy your group will bring with them you might consider just using a musical sound. After you get to know your group a little better they might be up for one of the call-and-response choices. In any case, if your group is not responding well to your choice (you'll know), then teach them a different one and scrap the one that didn't connect.

Below are the Attention Seekers I use the most. Once you understand the premise you can make up your own (and, of course, share them with me at the FUNdoing.com Contact page – you're awesome).

The following do not require any verbal interaction with the group:

**Bells & Whistles** These Attention Seekers are the musical sounds I referred to above. My favorite is a big cowbell (I bought mine in the Dairyland State to make it official). My other favorites: a duck whistle, a big foot call, and a manual air horn I found at the dollar store. I don't use a sports whistle. It's a bit too "shrilly" for teambuilding programs in my opinion. Besides, it also feels like every time I sound off one of these there's a foul!? **NOTE:** I also don't ever recommend a "human" whistle – the kind you make without props. Back in my early days as a physical education teacher I used this method to call in my students. One day a student of mine jokingly said, "I'm not a dog!" Ever since then I've used other sound devices. The comment really stuck with me, if you know what I mean.

**Raise Your Hand (with a little Wiggle)** This is probably one of the most common Seekers out there. The leader just raises a hand in the air and when the participants see the hand up they start doing the same. The understanding in this action is when the hand goes up the mouth closes. Now for me it's just not enough to raise a hand. I like to wiggle my fingers around a little when my hand is up – it adds a little sparkle to the request.

**Clap Your Hands...** This is another one of my favorite traditional Attention Seekers. When you are ready to call your group's attention, in a normal voice you say, "If you can hear me clap your hands once." The people that can hear you clap once. Most of the time you will not get everyone on the first clap (but, it grabs attention). So, then you say, "If you can hear me clap twice." Those that heard you clap twice. Then, "If you can hear me clap three times." If you need a fourth clap go for it – you'll get most groups by three. When you teach this to your group let them know that after they join in on the clapping you would like them to stop talking and listen for the important information you have to offer them.

**Back-to-Back** I learned this one from my friend Jim Cain. When your participants hear you say "back-to-back", they simply find another person in the room to stand back-to-back with – this action usually quiets groups down naturally without saying anything. However, when you teach this Seeker, just be sure to let your group know you will be expecting them to stop talking after they are standing back-to-back with someone else.

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The following are some of my go-to call-and-response Seekers – requiring some verbal interaction with my group:

**1, 2, 3.....Foooooore** When I call out “1, 2, 3,” anyone that hears me shouts out “Foore!” like a golfer warning others ahead of him/her of an impending shot. (I’m glad I looked up the proper spelling!) I will continue to call out 1, 2, 3 until I have everyone shouting out “Fore!” I use this one a lot to count down (in reverse) an activity. I’ll say, “10 seconds remaining!” Then with four seconds left I count, “1, 2, 3...” and the group says, “Fore” as they stop what they are doing.

**Zip.....Zap** This is a quick one. I will say, “Zip.” Anyone that hears me says, “Zap!” I’ll Zip my group until everyone says Zap. If I have a more playful group, or I just want to test the playfulness of my group, I’ll add some body language to this one. When I say “Zip” I’ll take a small step forward with a slight knee bend and point both index fingers (thumbs down) at my group – it’s more of a “hey, how’s it going” motion and not a “shooting guns” action (that’s why thumbs are down). I ask my participants to simply do the same on their “Zap” but with only one hand (thumb down). Again, it’s about connecting not threatening.

**Supercalifragilistic...Expialidocious** Okay, if you are not from my (or near my) generation you might not know the expression (is it a word?). If you don’t, search the expression in YouTube and watch the Mary Poppins video clip. You definitely see the fun factor I’m after with this one. I will say (or sing a little) the Supercalifragilistic part and my participants will finish with the Expiali... part. This one’s good for some laughs.

**Hey, Hey!....I Like Myself!** This one’s my favorite. I use it every chance I get (with the right group). I learned it from Mike Spiller. He’s a master gamer and all around great guy. I say, “Hey, Hey” with feeling. Those who hear me will say, “I like myself.” This second part has a little body language. As we (I join in) are saying, “I like myself” we lean back a little, put both our thumbs up (fingers curled in), then bring our thumbs up into our chests as a way to point to ourselves on the word “myself.” Two or three, “Hey, Heys” brings the whole group together. It’s a very uplifting experience.

**\*All Set.....You Bet!** This is another easy one for the reluctant groups. I say, “All set?” (this is a question), and those who hear me say, “You bet!” like they mean it. Two or three calls gets everyone together quickly.

**\*Scooby, Dooby, Do.....Where are You?** One of my favorite shows growing up. And it’s still around so everyone should know this one. Call out, “Scooby, Dooby, Do” and the answer back is, “Where are you?” This Seeker tends to bring out some other calls too when people are missing from the group (like after a break). “Marky, Dooby Do....Where are you.”

\*These last two are recent favorites. They come from Ilbra Israel. She posted a free “Attention Please” printout on the Teachers Pay Teachers website with 22 of her favorite call-and-response Seekers. If you want the download, here’s what you do. Go to: [teacherspayteachers.com](http://teacherspayteachers.com) then sign up for a free membership to the site (they never send me anything). When you’re in, search: **Whole Brain Teaching – Attention Please!** It’s all

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yours after clicking the download button. (By the way – there are tons of great resources for teambuilders at Teachers Pay Teachers!)

## **SAFETY:**

There is little risk (that I've experienced) with the Seekers I've shared. Do be careful when making up your own – your intention is to bring your group together. Right?!

## **FACILITATION:**

Just to reiterate, at the beginning of a program you want to teach your group about the expectations of the Attention Seeker(s) you will be using. The objective is to get their attention with the expectation that you will need their cooperation and silence after everyone has caught on to the Seeker in play. Depending on the kind of group you are working with, it might be necessary to respectfully remind them about your expectations so that you are able to relay the "important information" in a timely manner.

As you may now understand, some of the Attention Seekers above are less threatening than others. Some can even be considered "silly". Choose Seekers that match the energy you and your group are willing to share. Starting out too "silly" might make your participants wonder *what in the heck* they are doing with you. Some groups might be ready for silly right away. Go with your gut! You can always change it up if it's not working.

As you use Attention Seekers more and more and try out (and make up) new ones you will get a better sense about what works. Have fun with them – the Seekers and your groups.

## **VARIATIONS:**

- Consider "singing" out the call-and-response Seekers that have room for this. Zip, Zap doesn't give you much to work with, but Scooby Dooby Doo can be sung. Adding a little musical intonation can be fun with some groups. (And, singing can be a stretch/challenge some participants might be willing to try out in a safe environment.)

If you have a fun Attention Seeker please share it with me and I'll pass it along. Go to: [www.FUNdoing.com/contacts](http://www.FUNdoing.com/contacts) Fill out and send off the Contact form! You're awesome!