

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

Stationary Greeting

Needs & Numbers: Open up a big space in the room or find a space outside. This one plays well with 20 to 50 people.

Process: Ask everyone in your group to find their own “personal space” within the playing area – they can be close to each other but not able to reach out and touch anyone. Here’s an example script to get the idea:



Now that you all have your own space, we’re going to make some connections with others in the room – but our movement will be limited. First, let’s connect, using a fist bump, with as many people as we can without moving our feet from where they are right now – both feet are glued to the floor (or ‘planted’ in the ground). Let’s see how many people we can exchange fist bumps with. Ready? Go. [Let the fist bump action play out until all the movement/work stops.]

Okay. How many people were you able to connect with? Call out your number. [Provide time for this.] These people were easy to connect with; people close to you – not much effort was needed. Now, did you get everyone’s name when you connected? If not, do share names during the next round so we have a little better connection.

During the next connection, you can fist bump those close to you again, be sure to get their name and share yours, but you’ll get to reach a few more this time. Where your standing is your ‘home base.’ From this base you can keep one foot glued/planted and take one step into the crowd with your other foot, of course, bring the leg along with it. Be mindful of others around you before you step to avoid collisions. And try not to over-extend yourself so you don’t lose your balance. Your objective is to connect, fist fist-bump, with even more people in the group. And yes, you can step back to your home base, plant the step foot, and step out with the other foot to get even more connections. Remember to keep count of connections. Let’s go! [This round may play longer than the first. Get their attention after all movement has stopped.]

Okay. How many people were you able to connect with this time? Call out your number. [Provide time for this.] You still had easy connections with the people close to you – not much effort was needed. But you did need to make a bit more effort to connect with people further away. It took a little more time. It took a little more planning as well, would you agree? Now, did you get everyone’s name this time? Look around. How many do you remember. [Allow some time.]

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

What would you say is important about making connections in your life? [Take some time for answers.] What about making connections related to your career path? What is the value of connections? [Take time for answers.]

Now we are going to make some final connections with the next layer of people, those just out of reach. Start out as before, making contact with those around you, both feet planted. Then, step into the crowd for more. When ready, you get one 'jump' in any directions. A jump is pushing off from two feet and landing on two feet. When you get to your new spot you are allowed to pivot again. Remember, only one jump is allowed.

Before we start this final round of connections, what do we want to be mindful of? [Allow some time for a good conversation about safety – taking care of yourself and the others around you.]

It appears you are all ready for the final round. You may begin. [Wait until all the work is done.]

Nice work everyone. How many more connections were you able to make? Shout out your number. [Take time for this.]

Facilitator Notes: This one is straightforward. We like to be near the front of the group, or right in the middle of the crowd, so we can play as well – role modeling the actions. The main idea is that everyone stays in their original starting position, not walking around.

Talking Points:

Since we tend to present this one very early (often first) we don't process all the time. However, if you did:

- How many names do you remember? Were most of the people you remembered near you? Why do you think this happened? (A question for groups coming together for the first time)?
- How about the names of those players just beyond the initial fist bumps? Were their names more allusive? Why?
- Did you ever feel uncomfortable? Where do you think that feeling comes from?
- Were you able to "connect" with everyone in the room? What prevented you from connecting with everyone?
- What is a reasonable number of connections for a group this size? How many connections are comfortable for you in a group this size?
- What effort do you usually make in different situations to make connections – small groups, large groups?
- What can be important about connections in your life or career?

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

My Baggage Lies Over the Ocean

Needs & Numbers: If you have enough room, create one big circle with your group. If your room is limited, it's okay to have your group scattered around the space you have – they just need to be able to see you. Plays well with 10 to 25 (or more) for 10 to 15 minutes.

Process: This challenge is a nice warm-up for the body and the vocal cords – yes, this one's a singer. The song is sung to the tune of, "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean" (search YouTube for a rendition of this classic folk song to get the tune.) For our purposes, we're going to change 'Bonnie' to 'Baggage' bringing in a traveling theme. Once you know the tune, you are ready to introduce this one to your group.

We're going to 'scaffold' the learning on this one. Be the first to sing the song in front of the group – have fun with it. If others know the tune they can chime in. After the first introduction, sing it again inviting everyone to join in to the best of their ability. If needed, sing the song again and invite some hearty singing from the group. This initial scaffold is to get everyone comfortable with singing the song (or at least willing to).

My Baggage Lies over the Ocean,

My Baggage Lies over the Sea,

My Baggage Lies over the Ocean,

Oh, bring back my Baggage to me!

Bring Back, Bring Back,

Oh, Bring Back my Baggage to me to me.

Bring Back, Bring Back,

Oh, Bring Back my Baggage to me to me.

Now we're going to step up the challenge (learning). This time, when we sing the song we're to clap on every "B" sound/word – mostly "Baggage" and several "Bring Backs." Keep the song at a reasonable pace so there is a little time to think about the clapping. Consider performing this step two or three times to lock it in.

During this clapping stage, you can have a discussion with your group about learning. What does it take to learn something new? ("Practice" is a common response. "Wanting to learn" is another response to consider. "Having fun with something challenging – the brain likes to be challenged" is a deeper discussion.) Whenever it's possible, take the time needed for everyone to find success – it feels good to be confident in what you've learned before moving on. Consider this as well: How are the ones who 'get it' helping others who are struggling?

When we've locked in the singing and clapping, we're going to the next challenge. For

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

this part, we'll be singing, and squatting or standing. On the first 'B' word participants will be doing a small squat – bend in the knees. They hold this squat until the next 'B' word where they stand back up. On the next 'B' word they squat, on the next 'B' word they stand, and so on throughout the song. If no mistakes are made, everyone will be standing on the last "Baggage."

This challenge is another good time to talk about learning and to help each other reach mastery. Maybe it takes slowing down the song. Maybe it takes more practice and patience.

The final challenge is to put the clapping and the squat-stand together. On the first 'B' word everyone claps and squats. On the second 'B' word everyone claps and stands up. On the third, we clap and squat and on the fourth, we clap and stand. Repeat this to the end. As in the last challenge, if there were no mistakes everyone is standing on the last "baggage."

If the group is still having fun, give it another try a bit faster.

Talking Points: Explore the fear around doing something uncomfortable - singing. What is our philosophy around 'trying' something we're apprehensive about - when are we more likely to try and when are we less likely? Mistakes - What is our self-talk? How do others treat, or view, us when mistakes are made? What does it take to reach 'Mastery' in something? How good is Mastery? What are the factors related to 'giving up' on something? What are the factors to sticking with something that is difficult or something perceived to be "stupid?" What are the benefits of sticking with something?

Variations: If you dare, alternate Claps and Dips. Will they end up standing or dipped?

Why: This experience tends to move a lot of participants out of their comfort zones – because of the singing. And it also requires some vulnerability because they are facing each other, exposing their (possible) mistakes throughout the task. These are all good things to talk about since these concepts will be part of the group's program experience.

Back-to-Back - (no prop, attention seeking technique) This one is a pairing technique and a way to quiet the group. When someone needs a partner, they raise a hand and look for someone else doing the same thing, then they get together.

Needs & Numbers: No props needed. Be sure to have some discussion questions prepared to share (some suggestions below). Plays well with 10 to 50 people.

Process: When "Back-to-Back" is called, find someone near you to pair up with, then stand back-to-back with this person. All pairs listen for information. When "Face-to-Face" is called, pairs face each other OR find a new partner (depending on the instructions given) and stand face-to-face to complete the task given.

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

Some engaging WE Connect card questions:

(Find FREE WE Connect cards here: <https://weand.me>)

- What made you smile in the last two weeks?
- What is something you have always wanted to learn?
- How well would you get along with your clone?
- What is life teaching you right now?
- What is a personality trait you admire in others?
- What is a time you learned something from a failure?
- What is an interesting skill you have?
- What has been one of your favorite moments in life?
- What would your closest friend say is your best character trait?

Are You More Like

Possible Objectives: *Decision Making, Accepting Diversity, Listening, Compromising,*

Needs & Numbers: You will need a 'line' for this one. You could tape down a line, use an activity rope, or use one of the lines on a sports court or field. Plays well with 10 to 50 people.

Process: Clear out the center of the room as much as possible (you will find as you read on that I like to, "clear the center of the room" a lot - gets the oxygen moving). If the straight line is the easiest for you, just place some masking tape down the center of the floor. I'll use the circle formation here in my description.

Ask your students to stand around the outside of the circle. You will ask them to choose one of the two characteristics from each statement you are going to ask. If they are more like the first characteristic, step into the circle. If they are more like the second characteristic, stay to the outside of the circle. Leave a little time between each statement to give the students a chance to see who else is standing with them. I will play this one too, just stepping in and out as I read.

That's the simple gist. I like to use this activity as my introduction to the process of active learning - getting up and moving around. I keep it simple the first time with a little processing after. Down the road I can use this activity again to bring out more personal perspectives on the statements.

Note: I have had a great deal of fun with this activity. I try to encourage my students to think more about the characteristics of the characteristics. I will often hear, "but I don't like either." You might help them a bit by describing some of the characteristics of the items. This might help them, "get out of the box" so to speak.

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

The list below is not in any sort of order. You can pick and choose which statements will be serve your purpose at the time.

Are you more like...

1. chocolate or strawberries?
2. a carpet or wood floor?
3. a hard cover or paperback book?
4. skim milk or 2%?
5. a chair or a couch?
6. apples or oranges?
7. pants or shorts?
8. bath or shower?
9. jeans or khakis?
10. glass or plastic?
11. bunk bed or twin bed?
12. a bus or a plane?
13. a bracelet or necklace?
14. solids or stripes?
15. sandals or shoes?
16. shade or sun?
17. cursive or printing?
18. buttered or plain popcorn?
19. potato chips or pretzels?
20. a run or a walk?
21. soda or water?
22. panic or relaxed?
23. gel or paste?
24. a weekday or a weekend?
25. Chic Filet or McDonalds?
26. long hair or short hair?
27. fact or fiction?
28. Air mail or E-mail?
29. peanut or plain?
30. a cat or a dog?
31. salted or unsalted?
32. the escalator or the stairs?
33. a chocolate or oatmeal cookie?
34. cheerios or corn flakes?
35. math or art?
36. country or rock?
37. the ocean or a river?
38. a pen or a pencil?
39. fish or steak?
40. desktop or lap top?
41. 7up or Sprite?
42. diet or regular?
43. pasta or rice?

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

44. cheese or pepperoni?
45. hamburgers or hot dogs?
46. an Amusement park or a Water park?
47. Army or Navy?
48. fruit or vegetable?
49. television or radio?
50. CD or cassette?

Observations/Questions:

- Who can think of another pair to choose from?
- Did anyone have trouble deciding? Why?
- How many of you might have made a choice based on what one of your friends decided?
- Was there ever just one person in the center? on the outside? What was that like?
- Is hard to make choices sometimes? What makes it difficult?
- What sorts of choices might we be making in our classroom?
- Will we all make the same choices? Why not?
- What might be some negative aspects of being different?
- What are some skills we might need to practice to work through our differences in this class?
- What might be some positive aspects of being different?

Toss-a-Name (with Proper Tossing/Talking Procedure – PTP)

Needs & Numbers: Lots of safe tossables (e.g., stuffed animals, stress balls, rubber chickens, yarn balls, beach balls...), have enough so there is one for every person in the group. You'll also want lots of open



space – including lots of overhead space for high-flying tosses. This one plays well with 8 to 30 participants of any age (catching is not required in this game, so even if we're still working on fine motor skills we can play).

Process: This name game can be played with one big group or divided into smaller groups of 8 to 10 people.

Each group in play will start out with one tossable. Using this one tossable, provide some time for the players to learn some names and/or review names of the people in

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

the group. (NOTE: Even if the people in the group know each other's names, it's still a positive behavior to share names to warm up for the Game.) Here's a quick way to learn/review:

One person in the group is given a tossable. This person holds up the tossable and says their first name. After sharing the name, the person with the tossable HANDS it to the person on their right. This person holds up the tossable and says their name, then HANDS the tossable to the person on their right. The tossable is handed around the circle(s) in this fashion until everyone has shared their name once, or even twice (around the circle). When the tossable is back to the person who started the name sharing, the group(s) is (are) ready to play.

Here's an example script covering what Chris like to say:

Now we're ready to get into some more action. Hopefully, you have picked up, or know, a few names of the people in your group. To help us anchor these names and even more names, we're going to practice using them.

From this point on, to the best of your ability, during the Game, I'd like you to use 'Proper Tossing Procedure' or PTP as we like to call it. When tossing an object to someone always use an underhanded toss, like this...[provide a demonstration of an underhanded toss.]

Now, PTP has three ordered steps:

- *Step 1: When you want to toss an object to someone, first call out their name.*
- *Step 2: Make a connection with this person so you know they heard you and are preparing to toss something to them. This connection could be eye contact, a thumbs up, a hand up indicating a request to wait, or a verbal 'Ready' call. Anything that makes that connection.*
- *Step 3: When ready, toss the object to the person.*

One of the goals in this Game is to complete as many 'Toss-and-Catch' combinations as possible. Any deviation of the PTP procedure could lead to a mishap. A mishap could be a drop. A mishap could be running into another person. A mishap could be the object colliding with a part of the body not used for catching. Mishaps are bound to happen along the way. Do your best to use mishaps as learning opportunities and adjust your behaviors to avoid repeating a mishap and increase the number of Toss-and-Catch combinations.

After you get started with one tossable object, I'll be adding more objects to the Game. All tossable objects added to the Game must be used, so the complexity of the Game

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

will increase. And that's okay. Do the best you can. Learn from mishaps. Solve the problems that surface. And don't forget, learn the names of the people in your group.

Finally, any time you hear me call, "FREEZE!" Please stop all tossing and listen for the information I want to share with you.

Let the group(s) play again for another 90 seconds. Then call "FREEZE!"

If there is more than one group in play, ask each group for three volunteers, from each group, to switch groups – "Who would be willing to take a little risk and change groups? I would like to see three people from each group move to a different group. Those switching groups, move to the group next to you in the clockwise direction. Thank you." [You might need to help with the direction of the switch.]

Add a third tossable object to the group(s) and let them begin again. (No need to have any sort of discussion during this transition.)

Continue to observe behaviors and make mental notes about what's taking place – the stuff you want to talk about in relation to the group's processes and problem-solving abilities. After another 90 seconds call another "FREEZE!"

First, ask for another three people (who are not holding a tossable object) in each group (when playing with multiple groups), to move to a new group. Then, pull in this specific communication metaphor:

From this point on, PTP is now, '**Proper Talking Procedure.**' The tossable objects are important messages you want to communicate to the person you're getting it to.

Dropping the message means this person will not understand what you're trying to communicate to them.

Before we begin again, after adding another message, what have you learned so far from this interactive exchange of tossing these objects that will increase our chances of clearly communicating our messages (talking to group members) – increasing the chances of more toss-and-catch combinations – to others in the group?

Work through some good discussions about what the participants want to see from each other during the final rounds of the Game. How will 'talking' to each other look and sound like? Then add another tossable object to the group(s) and let them begin.

During this round, and one more final 90-second round, I will "FREEZE" the group(s) if I observe behaviors they have agreed to avoid. I'll ask them how they can fix the 'mishaps' and then start the Game again. If there is an agreement to change or behave in some way, I choose to hold them accountable, at first, for their behaviors. Over time, of course, we want them to hold each other accountable, but initially, modeling how that looks and sounds can be important.

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

After the first 90-second 'metaphorical' round, "FREEZE" the group(s), add one more tossable object and let them continue. Again, I will "FREEZE" the group(s) if I see desired behaviors going unchecked.

After the final 90-second round, we'll wrap up the solid take-aways from the experience, focusing on the behaviors the group wants to continue and behaviors they want to avoid. Then we get right to the next activity. My preference is to dive deeper into discussions in between task-actions and do a **brief** review of learnings after the conclusion of the activity. I want to get them back into practicing desired behaviors, so I don't lose engagement.

Why: Help the group learn names and discover, through experience, the importance of 'proper talking procedure' so their communication during a program can be more effective.

Boogie Ball

Needs & Numbers: You'll need one safe tossable item for each circle of 10 to 12 participants and a lively song and a loud sound system for this one (or a loud cow bell).

Process: Circle up eight to ten players and give each circle a soft tossable. Players begin tossing around the soft tossable to each other following proper tossing procedure (see, Mass Toss-a-Name Game above). When the music starts the player with the tossable becomes the "leader" of the group and begins to walk around the room (carefully being mindful of other groups but also having some fun with it) while the rest of the group follows their leader in a single-file line. When the music stops each group circles up again and starts tossing the tossable again, following proper tossing procedure. Four or five musical interludes work out well to energize the group.

Partners Galore

Handshakes w/Handshake Frenzy

Purpose: Connect with others in the group, engaging in short conversations. Focusing on and remembering the people each person talked with.

- Salmon Handshake
- Caterpillar Butterfly
- Colorado Rodeo
- Down Under

Lots of Handshakes Video and Handshake Frenzy Video

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/handshakes-part-1-learning-part-2-playing-videos>

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

Icebreaker Questions – from the WE Connect deck from Chad Littlefield

<https://shop.weand.me/products/we-connect-cards>

Toe-to-Toe, Palm-to-Palm, Back-to-Back

Needs & Numbers: You'll need a nice size open area. Plays well with 2 to 24 players (an even number of players is best; however, this can work with small groups of three if needed) for 25 to 35 minutes.

Process: This activity demands a bit of physical muscle movement and stress. We like to warm-up participants with other simple stretches like in Ripples an/or easy muscle movements like in Jump Around before we do this one. Each player will need a partner (have them introduce themselves if they don't already know each other). We will always demonstrate each physical action before the players perform it – either using a participant to help one of us or another facilitator if available.

Toe-to-Toe: Facing your partner, stand toe to toe. Grab each other's wrists and SLOWLY lean back into a balanced position until both partners' elbows are extended (arms are straight). Then each pair is challenged to squat down together (not beyond comfort level) and then stand back up without losing their balance. Repeat if desired to attain a nice flow of squat to stand. Give that person a "high five", thank them for being your partner and go find another partner (size, most often, does not really matter). Have each player introduce themselves to their new partner and perform "toe-2-toe" with their new partner.

Palm-to-Palm is the next challenge. Partners face each other about three to four feet apart and place their palms together (do not allow them to interlock fingers). Then challenge each pair to slowly lean forward, bending at the elbows keeping their bodies straight, until their foreheads touch and then press with the hands to stand back upright. Increase the challenge by asking players to scoot their feet back a "baby step" and repeat touching foreheads and then standing back up (or making a step towards the center before standing if needed). Have them keep scooting back each time for a bigger and bigger lean – looking for the "mean lean." After each pair has reached their challenge limit have each player give their partner a "high five", thank them for being their partner and go find another partner. New partners introduce themselves to each other. Ask each pair to perform "palm-2-palm." Then demonstrate,

Back-to-Back: Partners stand back-to-back (yes, those cheeks) and then scoot their feet forward until the pair is leaning against each other like an "A" frame– heels at least two feet apart. The player's arms and hands are down by their sides. Pairs are allowed

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

to press hands together but do not let them link elbows. The challenge is to squat down as far as comfortable and then stand back up together. After a successful squat and stand have pairs high five and thank each other for being partners and keeping each other safe. **WARNING:** Each of these actions has its own safety issue – mostly footing issues. Identify and remove (if possible) any hazards and warn participants of any possible dangers. Again, these actions will put strain on certain muscle groups. Encourage participants to pay attention to their abilities.

Talking Points: Support, Risk-Taking, Choosing your challenge, Communication.

Wow, Wow (from *The Brain Power Classroom* by Dave Beal)

Purpose:

Engage the brain to focus attention before providing new information.

Working with another person on a difficult challenge and accepting mistakes.

Improving through practice.

Process:

- Creatively pair up participants and ask them to face each other.
- Have students clap once in front of their chest and then once against their partner's palms saying, "Wow."
- Next, they clap once in front of their chest and then twice against their partner's palms saying, "Wow, Wow," with each clap.
- Again, they clap once in front of their chest and then three times against their partner's palms saying, "Wow, Wow, Wow."
- Now, they clap once in front of their chest and then twice against their partners palms saying, "Wow, Wow."
- Finally, they clap once in front of their chest and once on their partner's palms saying, "Wow."
- Pair continues to follow the 1-2-3-2-1-2-3-2-1 pattern of clapping.
- Challenge: See how long they can maintain the rhythm.
- For a challenge, have them increase their speed with each set.

Variation: Use another sound/word, like Good or Nice.

AEE Rocky Mountain Region PlayNote with Chris Cavert

Claps, Winks/Blinks, and Belly Laughs

Needs & Numbers: This one can be done in a classroom (with desks and chairs around) or an open space – no running is involved. Plays well with 12 to 50.

Process: Here's a possible script to get the ideas...

The first thing I would like you to do is choose a number from 1 to 5 – (a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) choose it in your head, don't tell anyone. The first rule of the game is that you can't change your number until instructed to do so. With this number in mind, you are going to want to find the others in the group who chose the same number – without verbalizing your number to anyone. You are going to do this by mingling around and clapping your number with other players. Your clap, of course, will need to equal the number in your head – so if you chose 3, you clap 3 times. The second rule is that there is no talking during the game. When you find someone of your number (someone who clapped the same number of times you did – stick with them and move around together to find others - we should end up with no more than 5 separate groups when we're done. Any questions? Mingle and clap. FUND YOUR GROUP.

Let's find out who the groups are. When I call your number, clap together, that number, with your group – ones, twos, threes, fours, fives. Great job. Okay, choose a different number from 1 to 5 – keep this number in your head and don't forget the second rules (you can review if needed). This time however, we're going to wink your number to other players – if a one eyed wink doesn't work for you, you can do a two-eyed blink. Again, we should end up with no more than five distinct groups. Any questions? Mingle and wink or blink.

Fantastic. Give me a loud 'Woooo' after I call your number. Where are the ones, twos, threes, fours, fives? Okay, one more time. Choose a new number, one you haven't chosen before, from 1 to 5 – remember no changing after you choose. This time we're going to find our group using big old belly laughs. For example, if you chose the number 4, it will be four big laughs (it's good to give a good demo here, be the first to show the belly laughs – with gusto) – don't be shy. Any questions? Mingle and laugh it up!!

Okay, let's identify ourselves. When I call your number, let out that many laughs together. Let's hear those laughs ones – ready.... Okay, twos – ready....threes, ready....fours, ready....okay fives let's hear it!!

Facilitator Notes: You might need to provide a little demonstration for each interaction, especially the belly laughs. Be the first person in the room to let out big old laughs – it gives permission for others to do the same.