

# Build Strong Communities Through Play, Connections, and Conversations

with Dr. Chris Cavert | AEE-APC, Pune India 2024

Play is a powerful force. Brown and Vaughan, through their works on play, show us that in the realm of play, individuals discover their true selves, unlock their potential, and cultivate life skills. Play softens our path to meaningful connections with others. Through connections, we can step into conversations that matter, resulting in stronger and more courageous communities. This Master Class will be filled with interactive fun play and, 'serious' play that will bring us together into community. In community, we can discuss how we will use this experience to improve and strengthen our lives and the people around us. How will we play in our schools? How will we play at work? How will we play with our family and friends? Play is a powerful force. Together let's learn how to use it.

*Dr. Chris Cavert, Educator, Author, Trainer*

## Session Times

10:00 – 11:30: Play (90-min)

11:45 – 1:00: Connections (75-min)

2:00 – 3:15: Conversations (75-min)

3:30 – 5:30: Play. Connections. Conversations. Community. (120-min)

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## Play (90-min)

### The DeKine Game

Needs & Numbers: No props needed (just a good imagination). Plays well with a circle of 12 to 30 people.

Process: If you choose, you are going to cross the circle - pantomime an action - and hand off the action to someone across the circle. They can choose to take it or not. If they don't take it, the pantomimer keeps going around to others in the circle to see if they will take the object off their hands.

Provide a demonstration by taking an imaginary object across the circle. For example, something heavy being pulled by a rope, dribble a basketball, juggling three bowling pins, carrying a heavy rock or a log. Once at the other side of the circle, hand off your item to a willing participant

Play for three or four minutes. Invite people to cross with an object any time. NOTE: Ask the group to avoid moving too fast across the circle (e.g., Speed Skating).

Discussion: What was facilitated objective? Creative, silly, fun, connection with others, getting people moving (still no touching each other), ease into things

### Clap, Jump, Spin, Run! (from the book, 'Tinker: Building Purposeful Experiences from Classic Adventure Activities.')

Needs & Numbers: Play in an obstacle-free open area large enough for one circle of plays. Plays well with 12 to 40 people.

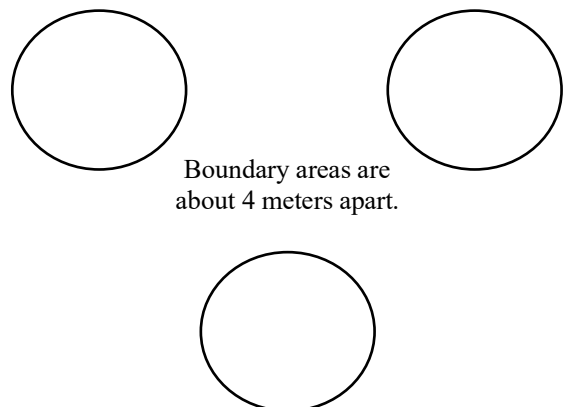
Process: One large circle facing in. Set the four-person 'Quads' – Clapper (one loud clap), Jumper (straight up), Spinner (360 around - jump it or walk it), Runner (to a new spot in the circle). Person to the left of the runner starts a new Quad. Facilitator is the only one who may start a NEW quad. Play for two to three minutes. The facilitator can start a new Quad about every 15 seconds to make it chaotically interesting.

Talking Points: Focus, Helping Others, 'Multiple-Tasking', Fun

### Around the World: Fast Fingers

(Shared by Mark Collard – video link below)

Needs & Numbers: You're going to be setting up three different travel destinations in a nice big open area (free of large obstacles). So, you'll need some cones, game spots, or long activity ropes (about 16 meters) tied at the ends so you can put down a square or circle. Plays well with 15 to 40 people.



Process: With feedback from the group, name each of the boundary areas a place in the world – places the players will be traveling to. Then, invite each person to choose their starting destination for their trip (the idea is to have players standing in all the locations).

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZysfWuYrHTU&t=132s>

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## **Eye Contact Partner Tag (ECPT)** (found in, *The EMPTY Bag* by Hammond & Cavert)

Needs & Numbers: You'll need a good-sized open space free of obstacles. Plays well with 16 to 25 (or more) for 10 to 15 minutes.

Process: Have (or set up) every player with a partner. The best-case scenario is where partners are about the same height (a major height difference is something to metaphorically talk about when you pair up randomly). A group of three will work if needed. Create a boundary area suitable for your group size (use safe corner markers like collapsible cones, spots, or coats and sweaters if you are outside) – the smaller the area the more interesting the game (the larger the area the faster the running speeds – be careful).

This one plays like the historical *Partner Tag* (Rohnke) where players use a simple hand tag to transfer the "IT" to his or her partner. In this tag game, the only player you are allowed to tag is your partner. After being tagged the new IT must first make two complete turns in place before going out to tag back his or her partner. These same rules apply to ECPT, however, the one big difference is the mode of tagging. Partner tags must be done by making eye contact. With this in mind, there are a few additional "play fair" rules. All players must keep their eyes open. Non-"IT" players must keep their open eyes (it's okay to blink) at head level – either making eye contact with other players in the game or looking at some part of another players skull area (e.g., ear, back of the head). Finally, play the no-contact rule. Players (usually non-IT players) are not allowed to "link up" in any way with another person as to prevent another player access to making eye contact with his or her partner.

To start the game, decide which player from the pair (or group) will be "IT" first. The "ITs" stand in the center of the boundary area for a count of five (the group counting together) while the other non-IT players find strategic (?!) advantage within the playing area. Traditionally, 60-second rounds work out well. After 60 seconds stop the group, ask for all the ITs to raise a hand, point to their partner and say, "Your IT" and begin another 60-second round.

After the two 60-second rounds you can (if necessary) declare the untagged partner the winner of the game.

Variations: You might add the rule that players may not maintain eye contact with anyone for more than 3 seconds – this adds a bit more "tagging" potential. We often progress into ECPT from the traditional tag version (Partner Tag) to keep the game and interest going. And if you have foam pool noodle toys in your gear closet, you can play Partner Tag using a noodle as the tagging device.

## **Flashback Tag (FT)**

Needs & Numbers: This tag game can be a no-prop activity, or it can be done with props – you would need one safe tossable (e.g., a crumpled-up piece of paper or soft stress ball) for every two people. You'll also need some safe items to mark off the boundary area. FT plays well with 12 to 20 people.

Set Up: No special set up. This is a fast-walking game, (hard to teach, but very important for safety), so a nice open area is great. You also might want to consider teaching the "Bumpers Up" running position. We want to stress at all times that the students watch out for each other and avoid "crashes." However, sometimes they will happen. Having Bumpers Up, arms up in front of

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the player's chest area, fingers up, palms facing away from the player's body, and a little bend in the elbows. This position will do a couple things. It will slow the players down a bit – it's hard to walk real fast with the arms up, and the hands and arms will be used to absorb some of the shock of another player's body if they come too close to each other. (And, in this game, the hands are ready for tagging.)

Process: This is a tag game. **No-Prop:** Each player will be tagging other players to gain a score. A tag can only be done using a hand and touching the "back" – not back-side – of any other player in the group. Each time a player touches someone's back they get a point. **Prop:** Hand out the soft tossables – half the group will be starting with a tossable. To start the game with props, you'll count down, "3, 2, 1, Toss!" On the word toss, players with the objects will toss them into the center of the boundary area using a nice high arching underhanded toss. Once the objects touch the ground players can either avoid the objects or run in to get one.

SAFETY NOTE: When using soft tossables, teach them your expectations. Tosses cannot be made at anyone more than four feet away – show them what this looks like. And, the toss is not a fast pitch. Easy throws at the back. Be respectful to all players. If throws are too fast, stop play and discuss expectations. The game is more fun when we take care of each other.

Before starting, show the boundaries to the players. It's helpful if you have someone run around the boundaries so everyone can tell or see where they are. (You don't want to make them too big – more running than you need, or too small where it is not a challenge. You will be able to determine what works.) In this game it really doesn't matter if someone goes out-of-bounds. If a player is out-of-bounds, they will not be able to gain points – tags out-of-bounds do not count.

Each round lasts for 60 seconds. The objective is for the players to get as many points as they can during each round. Players will end up with different scores in 60 seconds, this is great – diversity. Explain that there is not an overall "winner." The idea will be to play several rounds and try to achieve a new personal best each time. When they are ready, give them the "GO" and start the time. Use the word, "FREEZE" to indicate that the 60 seconds is up – all movement and tagging stops. Ask them how they did, give them a little rest, challenge them to beat their personal best, and then start another round.

### Group Juggle in 60

Need & Numbers: You'll need one safe tossable for every group of 10 to 12 participants. It's fairly easy to work with up to five of these small groups at once.

Process: Circle up 10 to 12 players. Give each circle a soft tossable. The person with the tossable is number 1, the person to the right of number 1 is number 2 – go around to the right and number off to the last person. "Remember your number!" Now, each circle is asked to mix themselves up so each player is standing next to two different people from their circle (circle groups stay together when they mix up).

Now, player number 1 tosses (nicely) to player 2, player 2 tosses to 3, 3 to 4, 4 to 5 and so on until the highest number tosses back to number 1. Practice the same tossing order for a few minutes.

The Challenge: Get as many points as possible in 60 seconds. You get a point for each catch made after a toss (following number order). Players are required to stay in their position in this second

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circle and the object must be “tossed” not handed off (i.e., the tossable must travel through the air at some point before being caught). Play a few rounds to see if groups can better their score.

When playing with multiple groups, give everyone practice time and then start them all together for the 60 second rounds. The overall idea is for each group to improve after some problem solving following each round.

### Get 20

Needs & Numbers: You’re going to need one, or more, decks of standard playing cards (depending on the number of participants in your group) – you need one deck for every 20 people. Up to eight groups of five players is manageable (up to 40 participants).

Set-Up: Before your program pick the card sets, you’ll need for each group – each set has five cards. Here is the algorithm for a set: One Ace (is worth ‘1’ or ‘11’), One face card (worth 10), One 2 (worth 2), and then two cards in sequence (e.g., 3 & 4, 4 & 5, 5 & 6, 6 & 7, 7 & 8, or 8 & 9 – these are all worth face value. NOTE: Don’t use the 10s). Each group of four or five will get five cards.

Process: Creatively divide your big group into groups of four or five. Then, give each of these groups a set of the five cards you put together. All groups have 10 minutes to come up with as many mathematical formulas, using all five cards, that equal the sum of 20. Of course, the symbols are invisible when the numbers are set out. Lots of possibilities with each set of cards.

Talking Points: How did you ‘play’ at this math game? How did you contribute? How did the way you feel about math influence your participation? Did you use (or ask for) resources to help you find the formulas (e.g., pen and paper)? Did you give up trying? Where does this behavior come from? In what ways did you see your group working together? Were you successful? How did you measure your success (e.g., process and product-oriented goals)?

### Take Two

See the details in this FUNdoing Blog video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C500B-YBVzw&t=17s>

### The Sons of Joe/Joan

I hope you remember the song and the passing (this one is really challenging to write up). Here are the words and basics:

Process: “The sons of Joe/Joan were playing pass the rock. Take it or leave it, take it again. They went diddy, noddy, niddy, noddy, niddy noddy nid. They went diddy, noddy, niddy, noddy, niddy noddy nid. The sons of Joe/Joan were playing....” Start: Left palm is up – and stays up throughout – with tossable in it. Right hand is ready to take tossable on rhythm and place it in the left hand of the person on their right. Teach and practice rhythm.

Talking Points: Learning, Practice, Failure, Persistence – stick with it – Recovery

### Web Rings (or Rope Rings)

(During the workshop, if we had the time, we made up some games with the short webbing lengths – about 1 meter. I’ll add a description of our favorite during the update once I’m home.)

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**Stuart Brown's work on play emphasizes its critical role in human development, well-being, and social bonding.** Here are some key aspects of his research:

- 1. Biological Necessity:** Brown views play as a fundamental biological drive, essential for both animals and humans. Through his work, he argues that play is as crucial as sleep or food for physical and mental health.
- 2. Developmental Impact:** Play is key to childhood development, helping children learn social skills, problem-solving, creativity, and emotional regulation. It fosters cognitive development and supports exploration and risk-taking in a safe environment.
- 3. Lifelong Importance:** Brown stresses that play is not just for children but remains vital throughout adulthood. For adults, engaging in playful activities boosts creativity, innovation, and stress relief, enhancing overall quality of life.
- 4. Social Bonding:** Play strengthens social connections and improves empathy. Brown found that play deprivation in childhood can lead to issues with social adaptability and emotional health, suggesting that play helps build trust and cooperation.
- 5. Evolutionary Function:** In his work, Brown links play to evolution, showing how it is embedded in the behavior of animals and humans for survival. Through play, species develop resilience and flexibility in dealing with their environments.
- 6. Restoration and Healing:** Play has therapeutic potential, helping people recover from trauma, anxiety, and depression. Brown's research highlights how play fosters emotional resilience and acts as a natural antidote to stress.

In summary, Stuart Brown's work establishes play as a profound and multifaceted force in human life, shaping personal growth, social interactions, and overall well-being across the lifespan.

Brown, S., (2010). *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. NY: Avery.

(ChatGPT 15 SEPT. 2024)

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## Connections (75-min)

### Toss-A-Name

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need some open space – enough to create circles of players. Each circle will have 10 to 12 people. Play with up to 50 people. You'll also need one soft tossable for every two people. Optional: If you have one game spot per person, use the spots – after forming circles, everyone will place a game spot under their feet.

**Process:** Each group starts with one safe tossable. During the activity, everyone is asked to follow, “Proper Tossing Procedure” or PTP for short. PTP involved three steps. 1) Call out a person's name – someone you will be tossing the object to. Then, 2) make a connection – this could be making eye contact, holding up a hand to indicate the name was heard, or another form of connection that works. Then, 3) toss the object. During this activity, catching is not required. So, if the object is dropped there is no consequence. The person who has attempted to catch it simply picks it up and is ready to follow PTP for the next toss.

The overall objective is to learn names. While PTP is going on, participants are listening to names and getting ready for a catch when needed. After the first object has gone around to several people in the group, the facilitator goes around to each group and hands someone another safe tossable object. Now, two objects are moving around the group – again, all tosses follow PTP. After another minute or so, another object is added to each circle.

The three objects are tossed for another minute. Then, call “FREEZE.” At this time, ask everyone to stop tossing objects. When the tossing stops share the next step in the activity. Everyone holding an object is asked to stay where they are. Players who do not have an object are invited to move to a different circle in the area. If you are playing without game spots, let them know, “no circle can have more than 12 players. If you are playing with game spots, players without an object simply go around to the different circles in play looking for an open spot. And, it's always great when others in the group point out the open spots for the ones looking.

Once everyone stops moving, the tossing (PTP) continues. Over the next several minutes, three more objects are added to each group. Once six objects are in play for a while, another “FREEZE” is called and player without objects move to another circle. Play continues with six objects for one or two minutes followed by one move “FREEZE.” Finally, play for another couple minutes before stopping the action.

Before moving on, ask each circle to go through all the names in there group – get in some final names practice with each group.

### Name Card Shuffle

Find all the details in the first part of this OnTeamBuilding blog post:

<https://www.onteambuilding.com/otblog/what-why-name-card-exchange#/>

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## Card Groupings

**Needs & Numbers:** One deck of playing cards for up to 52 players.

**Process:** Prepare your cards in a way that will help you create group sizes you want. For example, if you have a large group of 40 to 50 players, put all like face cards together – Aces to Kings. Then hand out the cards starting with the Aces. Once everyone has a card you will know, by the cards remaining, how many people are in your group and the types of card groupings you can make.

**Pairs:** Like face and color. **Groups of Four:** Like Face. **Bigger groups:** Like suit even and odd numbers. **Larger groups:** Like suit. Be creative with the cards your group has to mix players up.

Before each grouping, do a blind shuffle (mixing cards between players) so you can create new groups of people. With each group you can ask things like – Find as many commonalities as possible between each other in the next 5 minutes. Everyone shares their favorite vacation (or movie, or night out, or book) and why in the next 5 minutes. In the next five minutes each of you share what you hope to get out of the program today. Everyone share a goal they are working on.

## What You Say

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need a standard deck of playing cards for this activity (the bigger the better). You might choose to use the 5's and below depending on the time and the number of players you have. (If you have more than 20 players you'll need more cards – Aces to 5s)

**Process:** The basic idea is to deal one card to every player in the group. Then each player will give the number of responses to the topic presented by the facilitator that is equal to the number/rank on the card. I note that the Aces can be a 1 or 11 – the player holding the Ace can choose. For example, ask each player to talk about him- or herself – if Bob is holding a three, he tells his partner three things about himself. Or you could ask players to give positive feedback to as many people in the group as the number indicated on their card or, if the number they have is 3, say 3 things you want to remember about the activity as a way to process or reflect on the activity.

If you set this up as a partner activity, have players hold their cards up and find someone else doing the same thing. Players get together in pairs, share info, and then trade cards. When each person is ready to share again, they hold up their card and look for someone else doing the same thing.

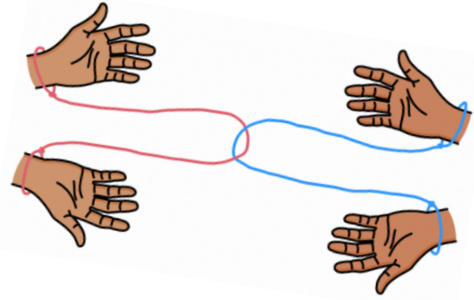
**Possibilities:** Add a few high cards (e.g., 8s, 9s or 10s) to spice it up. Watch for the reactions to the high cards – talk about this later. You could use the face Cards for relationship questions: Kings - talk about some of the leadership qualities you observed during an activity. Queens - talk about some of the helping behaviors you noticed. Jacks - talk about a setback you noticed during an activity.

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## Rope Puzzle

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need one five-foot Buddy Rope (about 1.25 meters long) for every person. This one can be played with up to 50 participants. (NOTE: It can be difficult to manage 50 people – 25 pairs – but it's doable. Be sure to keep a keen eye on all the pairs and stop any horseplay right away.)



### Set-Up:

- To save time, tie the loops into the rope prior to your program. Loops should be just big enough to slip over the hand – avoid making the loops too big. Big loops slip off the wrist easily making the puzzle difficult to solve.
- When you have time, teach your participants how to tie an overhand knot on a bight (if you don't know this one, look it up on the internet).

### Process:

- After each participant receives a rope handcuff, they are creatively partnered up.
- Set up the 'puzzle.' Have one person put their handcuffs on – one hand through one loop onto the wrist and the other hand through the other loop onto the wrist. Their partner takes their handcuffs and puts one loop on their own wrist, then drops the other loop through their partner's open arms then puts the second loop through their other wrist so that the set of handcuffs are interlocked. (See graphic above.)
- These two interlocked people are challenged to separate from one another without 1) cutting or breaking the rope, 2) untying the knots, or 3) taking the loops off their wrists and hands.
- Answer as many non-solution questions as the entwined pairs ask and continually emphasize that there is a solution without violating any of the rules.

### Possible Facilitator Script:

- "This next activity is going to be a paired challenge. Go ahead and find a partner." *[Give the group a moment to do this.]*
- "Great. Now, I'm going to come around and give each group a set of these 'Buddy Ropes.' *[Hold them up.]* Once everyone has one, I'll show you how to put them on." *[Take a moment to distribute the handcuffs. For larger groups, have some participants help you hand them out.]*
- "Now I'm going to show you how to put them on. Can I have a volunteer to help show the group how it's done? *[Grab a volunteer from the crowd]* Feel free to follow along with me. To start, have one person put on their Buddy Ropes. *[Have the volunteer demonstrate this.]* Now, I'm going to put on one loop and then drop the other end of their rope through my partner's arms. *[Demonstrate this.]* Finally, I put that last loop on my wrist, which links us together." *[Demonstrate this.]*



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- “Once we’re linked, the goal is to separate, or ‘un-link’ without cutting or damaging the rope, untying any of the knots, or taking the rope loops off either hand.”
- “What questions do you have about this puzzling challenge? *[Pause]* And yes, there is a solution! After linking with your partner, you can start.”
- *[Float around the room, encourage, answer questions, and congratulate groups if they are successful. Allow this to play out for 5-10 minutes, depending on the energy of the group and how many people get done.]*

### Talking Points:

- Describe the steps you took to find a solution to the puzzle. What did you learn from the different steps?
- Think back. What help did you get along the way?
- Did anyone think about asking for help? What did you do about it and why?
- Did anyone think about offering help to others? What did you do and why did you make that choice?
- Did anyone ‘force’ help on others? Why did you make this choice?
- What is your position on helping others? What is your position on asking for help?
- If you were not able to unlink from your partner, what were some of the thoughts that went through your mind? What did you do with these thoughts?
- What are some places in your life where you need to ‘think outside of the box?’ Do you think it’s easy or hard to think like that? Why?
- What does it take to get out of challenging puzzles? What are the things you did during the activity to get unlinked?
- Raise your hand if, at some point during the activity, you thought the puzzle was impossible to solve. What other things in your everyday lives do you think are impossible to solve? Consider this. Can any of the things you did to solve this puzzle work on solving everyday puzzles?

## Ankles Around the World

**Needs & Numbers:** Lead this one in an open obstacle-free area. You’ll need one soft tossable (e.g., stress ball or tennis ball) for each person. The large group will be divided into smaller groups of eight to 10 participants. It’s manageable with about 50 participants – five groups of 10.

**Process:** Creatively divide the whole group into smaller teams of eight to 10 people. Distribute the soft tossables to each group – you could have one person from each group come up to the front for the tossables needed. Each person is given a tossable and holds the tossable in their right hand. Each team circles up. Before the challenge each person places their tossable between their right ankle and the left ankle of the person to their right – the tossable may not touch the ground. Once tossables are in place, the challenge for the team is to move together, around, to the right (or left), stepping in a way so the tossable objects at their ankles do not fall to the ground. If a tossable falls, it is reset, and the group starts their 360 degree turn again.

**Facilitation Options:** To add some focus to the concept of ‘planning,’ give everyone five minutes to plan and practice their process. You can also enforce a ‘time budget’ of 15 (or 20) minutes. Also, instead of starting over after every drop, give each team three drops. After a drop the tossable is replaced and the group keeps going. After the third drop, the 360-degree goal restarts.

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Talking Points (for Ankles Around the World):

What was the mindset once you knew the challenge? Persistence/Grit, Communication – How did you talk to each other during the challenge? Time management – How did you maximize (or not) the time you have for the challenge?

## Conversations (75-min)

**What is a conversation?** – Brainstorm human behaviors of purposeful conversations.

Here are ten positive human behaviors that people exhibit when they are engaged in conversation:

1. Listen Actively: Listener(s) focus attentively on the speaker, showing genuine interest without interrupting, and responding in relation to what the speaker has shared.
2. Make Eye Contact: (This behavior is culturally specific – be sure to ask if making eye contact is okay with those involved in the conversation.) Participants maintain appropriate eye contact to convey engagement and understanding, without being intimidating or distracted.
3. Showing and Speaking with Empathy: Demonstrating understanding and/or awareness of the other person's emotions or perspectives, often by acknowledging their feelings.
4. 'Open' Body Language: Using relaxed and open gestures, such as uncrossed arms, nodding, or leaning slightly forward, to show receptiveness and warmth.
5. Asking Open-Ended Questions: Encouraging the other person to share more by asking questions that prompt detailed responses. Asking questions that prompt a "yes" or "no" answer is okay. Then, follow up with an open question like, "Tell me a little more about that."
6. Paraphrasing or Summarizing: Repeating or rephrasing what the speaker said to confirm understanding and show that you are paying attention. Be sure to ask after paraphrasing, "Is that what you were telling me?"
7. Giving Appropriate Feedback: Offering verbal affirmations or encouraging remarks, such as "That's a great point" or "I understand what you're saying."
8. Being Patient: Allowing the other person to express themselves fully without rushing them or interrupting. Really listen for the meaning and emotion behind the communication. Wait for the person to stop talking, think, then ask a question or respond to the message shared.
9. Avoiding Judgment: Listening with an open mind, refraining from being critical, dismissive, or condescending. Some conversations will be about sharing differences of opinion respectfully. In the end, you may simply agree to disagree, but you've experienced another perspective – which is a sign of curiosity.
10. Be Curious: Displaying genuine interest in the conversation by asking thoughtful follow-up questions or showing some enthusiasm for the topic being discussed.

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## “What should we be talking about?”

Needs & Numbers: You’ll need some Index/Note Cards and some pens. Small groups of three to five people will be getting together for a brainstorming discussion. So, if there are tables to sit around, that would be nice. Even a circle of chairs for each group is good. Or simply sit on the floor.

Process: Creatively form groups of three to five people and give each group seven to 10 index cards and one pen for each person in the group. The facilitator asks everyone, “*What topics of conversation should we be talking about right now?*” Each group is tasked to write one question per card related to a topic they think would make for a good conversation. Provide the groups with 10 minutes for this brainstorming step encouraging them to write at least six and not more than 10 question cards (again, one question per card).

After the brainstorming session, all the question cards are collected and reviewed (screened for appropriate topics based on the groups objectives). [NOTE: Program this activity right before a break so cards can be reviewed.]

All the cards chosen to be used during the next are placed face down on a table or the floor – this is the ‘card pool.’ Participants are creatively paired up. Then, one person from the pair goes over to pick a question, at random, from the pool and bring it back to their partner. For the next three to five minutes (depending on the energy of the group), pairs discuss the question picked.

If there is time for another round, the person in each pair that did not pick out the first card, takes it back to the card area and places it face down and quickly chooses another card from the pool. Then, everyone mingles around. The players with a card are looking for another person, without a card, to sit down and have another conversation for three to five minutes.

Talking Points: What was your opinion about the relevance of one of your conversations? What is easy about having a conversation with others? What is challenging about having a conversation with others? What did you learn from one of your conversations?

## WE Connect Cards – Pair and Share

Find the “FREE RESOURCES” link for WE Connect Cards (print-n-play) here:

<https://weand.me/>

## Story Cards

Find all the details at this FUNdoing Blog post:

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/story-cards>

## Rope Scripts

Find all the details at this FUNdoing Blog post:

Part 1: <https://www.fundoing.com/blog/rope-script-20-part-1>

Part 2: <https://www.fundoing.com/blog/rope-script-20-part-2-active-processing>

# Build Strong Communities Through Play, Connections, and Conversations

with Dr. Chris Cavert | AEE-APC, Pune India 2024

## Traffic Jam

(Please pick up the supplemental PDF Download for this activity included with the other AEE-APC downloads.)

**“What’s the Quote?” Cards** – What quotes can spark conversations we should be having?

Find all the details, and the print-n-play cards, at this FUNdoing Blog post:

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/whats-the-quote-cards-beta-testing-print-n-play>

**Circle Sit** – (With a conversation about trust.)

**Needs & Numbers:** You’ll need to prepare one 4.5 meter webbing (or thick rope) circle for every six to eight players (more in the Facilitator Notes below).

**Process:** (Here’s a possible script of the process) *Form groups of 7 or 8 players (if they haven’t done so yet). Every group should have a webbing circle. Everyone in your group should hold the webbing out in front of themselves with both hands – hands should be about shoulder width apart. You also want to have your feet about shoulder width apart to create a nice solid base of support. The idea here will be to work together, slowly and carefully, to lean back away from the webbing circle supporting each other in a balanced position. The challenge is to straighten your arms out and lean back to the point that if you did let go (but you don’t) of the webbing, you would fall over. We call this formation a trust lean. Okay, everyone give it a try – carefully lean away from the webbing supporting each other. Find a balanced point.*

*Okay, carefully pull yourselves up so you are all standing on your own power. We’re going to try the same thing again. However, this time, after you found your balance, you are going to slowly sit down together and then stand back up – slowly and carefully. Those of you who might have some knee concerns might want to step out of this one and support from the side – it’s perfectly alright to take care of yourself. Okay, go ahead and try the balance, sit, and then stand. Remember, it will take all of you working together to be successful. Once you stand back up wait for the rest of the groups to do the same and I’ll give you one more challenge.*

*Okay, for the final challenge, you are going to perform the same circle sit and stand. This time you are going to put three sit and stands together right in a row and add some sort of up-and-down sound effect. Remember, your motions should be slow and controlled with some sound to back it up. When you are ready you can begin.*

**Facilitator Notes:** The webbing circles used in the field of experiential education are often referred to as Raccoon Circles. For Circle Sit you’ll need to tie a **water knot** (search the internet for instructions if needed) with the ends of the webbing to make the connection really strong.

This activity requires a great deal of trust – in oneself and the group members. Make sure you believe the group is ready for this type of activity before you present it. A more serious frame of mind is needed to safely participate in this activity. No matter how safe you try to make it, there still might be groups that do tip over. The hope is always that no one would be injured. Go over to the group and see if you can refocus another attempt if they are up for it. Players tend to get real serious after a group fall.

We like to perform this one after Believe It or Knot, or some other introductory webbing circle activity so the players have a chance to work with the webbing circles. Leading into trust activities with simpler tasks tend to support the success of more difficult activities. Don’t forget to celebrate the group’s successes.

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Safety/Notes: Make sure each small group has enough room around them so if they were to tip over, they would not bump into anything like other players or large immobile objects. Also, this might be bad on some player's knees or backs. Make sure everyone understands the physical requirements of the activity so they can make an informed decision.

Talking Points: What did it take to successfully perform the sit and stand? Why is this important to a group of people? What does it take for you to trust other people? What qualities do you find in a person you trust? What sort of leadership took place? Why was this important? What is something you will want to remember from this activity?

## Fast Friends Procedure (or Protocol)

The Fast Friends Protocol is a technique to build closeness by asking and answering a series of questions (Ref. Aron, et al., below). One way to overcome these barriers to closeness is to engage in "reciprocal self-disclosure" – that is, to reveal increasingly personal information about yourself to another person, as they do the same to you.

Aron, A., Melinat, E., Aron, E. N., Vallone, R. D., & Bator, R. J. (1997). The experimental generation of interpersonal closeness: A procedure and some preliminary findings. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(4), 363–377.

"...there was only one method the Arons tested that could reliably help strangers form a connection: A series of thirty-six questions that, as Elaine and Arthur Aron later wrote, elicited "sustained, escalated, reciprocal, personalistic self-disclosure." These questions eventually became know as the Fast Friends Procedure..." (excepted from *Supercommunicators: How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection*, by Charles Duhigg, 2024)

### Set I

1. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
2. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
3. Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say? Why?
4. What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?
5. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
6. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30-year-old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you want?
7. Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?
8. Name three things you and your partner appear to have in common.
9. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
10. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
11. Take four minutes and tell your partner your life story in as much detail as possible.
12. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?

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## Set II

13. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
14. Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
15. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
16. What do you value most in a friendship?
17. What is your most treasured memory?
18. What is your most terrible memory?
19. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
20. What does friendship mean to you?
21. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
22. Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.
23. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?
24. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?

## Set III

25. Make three true "we" statements each. For instance, "We are both in this room feeling..."
26. Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."
27. If you were going to become a close friend with your partner, please share what would be important for them to know.
28. Tell your partner what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you've just met.
29. Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.
30. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
31. Tell your partner something that you like about them [already].
32. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
33. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?
34. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?
35. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
36. Share a personal problem and ask your partner's advice on how they might handle it. Also, ask your partner to reflect back to you how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.

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## Play. Connect. Converse. Community. (120-min)

### PLAY.

**Jump Forward, Jump Back** (Floyd H. version. Original version in, *The Leader's Handbook*, 2nd ed., by Michaelis & O'Connell called The Arrow Game.)

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need an obstacle-free space large enough for your group to form one big circle. This one works well with 20 to 30 players. (If you add more players, it might be difficult for participants to hear the calls from the facilitator.)

**Process:** Circle up players so they have about two or three feet between them. Simply ask them to do what you say. Here are the initial commands: "Jump Forward" means make a SMALL jump forward into the circle; "Jump Back" - means make a SMALL jump backwards away from the center of the circle; "Jump Left" - means make a SMALL jump to the left; "Jump Right" - means make a SMALL jump to the right. When there is understanding start the game.

**Round 1:** Begin with a slight pause (to make it easier) between calls and then decrease the time between calls as you go (play for about a minute - it can get tiring). Mistakes will be made with laughing and pauses - all that happens is part of the process.

**Round 2:** Have everyone take one step in towards the center - people are now closer together. The 'risk' of bumping into each other is a little greater. Play (for about a minute) just like Round 1. After stopping check in with the group to discuss possible learnings.

**Round 3:** Add two new commands - "Turn Left" - meaning a SMALL jump-turn 90-degrees to the left and "Turn Right" - meaning a SMALL jump-turn 90-degrees to the right. Do a few jumps left and jump right practices. Then, start as you did the first two rounds with the first four commands, then add a "Jump Left, Jump Right, Jump Right, Jump IN..." - there will be confusion (in most cases), because in this 'turn' orientation jumping IN can mean different things to group members.

When (you and) the group recognizes this conflict, stop and work through how they will proceed with the two new commands in play. Basically, you want them to come to consensus as to how they will move in relation to the commands at any given time. Allow the group to practice (if needed) and work things out before going back to the 'game' of commands in sequence.

**Talking Points:** What happens in our lives when we 'bump into' people (metaphorical considerations). What are some of our personal factors that lead to us making mistakes? When we encounter different points of view how do we handle them as a group and how do we come to consensus so we can move on and/or move forward? Mistakes - What is our self-talk? How do others treat, or view us when mistakes are made?

### **Rock, Paper, Scissors (RPS) Balance**

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll want some obstacle-free space. Plays well with any number of pairs.

**Process:** Pairs face each other and place their own feet in a heel-toe stance. Have about 12-inches between players feet. Play RPS. The winner (always) places their front foot behind their back foot. The loser slides their front foot ahead to touch their partners front foot - toes-to-toes. Play RPS.

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Winner, front foot back. Loser slides front foot forward. Play continues until one person touches the floor with another body part (other than their feet).

Talking Points: How did you 'play' the game? What were you telling yourself (in your head) during play? What motivates you to participate in competitive activities? What reasons do you have for avoiding competition? What would have to change for you to be willing to compete against others?

### **Statue Tag** (found in, *Portable Teambuilding Activities*, Cavert)

Activity Objective: Avoid being the "IT" during the game while the IT wants to transfer his or her "IT" to someone else.

Need & Numbers: The only real optional equipment you could use for this one would be boundary markers to indicate the corners of your playing area if you think your group needs these parameters. This one plays well with 12 to 25 participants for about 10 to 15 minutes

Process: The Beta testing of Statue Tag has brought about some interesting discoveries – so, it might not have reached its final stages (does any activity ever do?). If you come up with additional considerations for this one, please let me know.

- Set up a spacious boundary area (using physical markers or simply point out the area) and make sure everyone knows where said boundaries are (after you finish reading this you'll have a better idea about the space you'll need).
- Have your group circle up.
- You are going to do one of those "blind picks" to determine who will be IT first (if you have more than 15 people playing, I suggest you pick two ITs). Ask everyone to close her or his eyes. Say something like this: "If you are willing to be IT for this tag-type activity – without knowing anything about the game just yet – raise your hand in the air until I tell you all to put them down. I will walk around the outside of the circle and squeeze the left shoulder of the person(s) who will start off being IT. You will be the secret IT to start our game, so don't tell anyone."
- Now, (you the facilitator) walk around the outside of the circle and squeeze a person's (or persons') shoulder to indicate they are IT – make sure they feel it. After choosing the IT(s) ask all the players to put down their hands and open their eyes so you can explain the rest of the directions (in this variation, as noted above, the IT(s) have no idea what they are getting themselves into).
- Here's how it (and IT) works. Seeing as this is a tag game you are going to ask the players to stay within the boundary area to make it fair.
- The IT(s) of course does not want to be IT so she or he intends to pass off the IT to someone else by safely tagging another player above the waist.
- To be SAFE from the IT, non-IT players must stand completely still while making a fun statue-like pose. When players strike such a pose (in order to avoid being tagged) they must also have their eyes closed while they are standing still. If a player opens her or his eyes, she or he must take at least three steps, in any direction, away from where she or he

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is standing before they are allowed to go into a frozen statue again (in order to be safe from the tag). Taking more than three steps is perfectly legal; taking less steps is not.

- Now, the player that is IT has strategic options during this game. IT can be a statue just like everyone else. However, IT is allowed to peek while frozen in place hoping to tag an unsuspecting passer-by. Again, tags are “nice” tags above the waist (on an appropriate part of the body – some groups need to know this!). ITs can also simply walk around within the boundary area, eyes open of course, pretending to be “just any other player” and tag someone in passing. In any case, the ITs will need to use cunning and stealth to pass off the IT. Once an IT is NOT IT, she or he follows the not-IT rules of play.

### Some Considerations:

If there are two ITs in the game there is an extra cognitive task for the ITs. If an IT gets tagged by the other IT, the tagged IT is now “double IT.” This means that this double IT must tag two other players before she or he is no longer IT. Yes, this might get a bit confusing, so “the right group at the right time” fits here. If you end up with lots of ITs, ITs just more fun! I’ve also seen games end up with no ITs – something else to talk about. Could a player just be a statue the entire game (statue-by-choice here)? Of course, however, I don’t tell them this ahead of time. I like to see how the game plays out. Again, it’s something great to talk about in the end.

Make sure to emphasize the point that if a non-IT player’s eyes open she or he must take at least three steps before a safe statue can be made again. Now, the IT could just circle around one player waiting for opened eyes, but, in the spirit of play, this might not be the “playfulest” choice (then again...). You might also ask the group to play through this activity in silence – so as to prevent people calling out the name of the IT when discovered (or you could just ask them not to call out IT’s name). As the facilitator – considering your group – you can decide how you want to frame it.

This has been, for me, a very interesting activity to watch. It seems to go well in rounds of about three to five minutes. There have been times when I have presented a short one-minute game and then ask if anyone needs clarification on the directions. Once we’re clear, we play a longer round.

Safety & Facilitation: Since I present Statue Tag as more of a strategic enterprise, I have not (to this date) witnessed any physical safety issues with this one. Also, I have yet to encounter any emotional safety issues beyond some anxiety participants have experienced when they are in the “eyes-closed” portion of the activity – “I got so nervous I almost peed my pants!” (true statement). There is some perceived risk that shows up with closing one’s eyes, but I always watch the crowd and stop the activity if needed.

### Variations:

Add foam pool noodle toys, giving each player a noodle toy to tag and add into their statue forms.

## Speed Rabbit

(Please pick up the supplemental PDF Download, Encyclopedia Speed Rabbita by Andrew Jillings, included with the other AEE-APC downloads.)

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## CONNECT.

### See Ya

Find the video of all the details at this FUNdoing Blog post:

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/see-ya-for-connecting-and-processing>

### **That Person Over There** (Using FUNdoing Image Cards)

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need some ample space to mingle around. Works well with 10 to 25 players for 12 to 15 minutes.

**Process:** (No Prop Version) Gather your group together in a large circle. When you say "GO" each player should go introduce themselves to another player in the group – shake hands, say your names – make sure you emphasize that they should REALLY learn the person's name. Then, each player goes off to find a player they haven't met yet. (We have players raise their hands up when they don't have a partner and look for someone else doing the same and get together.) Greet this new person (remember the name) and introduce yourself (both players do so). Now, one at a time each player will point out the last person they met – the last person they shook hands with. The pairs may need to move around to find that person. After both players point out "that person over there" they go off to find another player they have not met yet - introducing themselves and then pointing out the last person they met. Continue as long as the energy is good.

**Variations:** If (only if, because this is a no-prop book) you have some image cards, have players pick an image that holds a special memory for the person. Then, when they pair up with their first partner, they each tell the story of their card, then exchange cards. Now, when players go off to meet someone else in the group, first, they will always point out "that person over there" shared this story related to the cards they have – then they tell the story about the card. Cards are exchanged again, and each person always tells the story of "that person over there." At the end of the activity everyone is asked to stand to the right of the person that belongs to the story of the image on the card they are holding. After everyone is in a circle, players return the tag to the "right"ful owner.

**Talking Points:** What did you learn from this activity? What makes it difficult to remember information about others? What are some good ways to get to know others? What are some important reasons for getting to know others?

### **Phraseology Cards**

Find all the details at this FUNdoing Blog post:

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/phraseology-cards-set-1-print-n-play>

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## Overhand Knots – Pairs & Groups

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need one buddy rope (about 1.5 meters) for every 2 players. If you want to try this one with a small group of five to eight players, you'll need a longer rope, about six meters, for every group. Overhand Knots plays well with one or more pairs (up to 20 pairs is a good max). Or with five to eight small groups of five to eight players. Pairs can solve the challenge quickly (within a couple of minutes). But as you combine pairs to make longer lines, it takes more time. Plan for about 20 minutes for this one.

**Process:** Show everyone how to tie an overhand knot in one of the buddy ropes (or at the end of a longer rope if you're going right to small groups). Now creatively pair up players and give them a buddy rope. Each player holds a different end of their rope. The challenge for each pair is to tie an overhand knot in their rope without letting go of the ends.



When two sets of pairs have completed this first challenge, put them together to form a line of four people holding three buddy ropes between them – 'person-rope-person-rope-person-rope-person.' Now the challenge, without letting go, is to tie one overhand knot into each rope.

The final challenge, with buddy ropes – eight people and seven ropes. Tie one knot into each rope.

When you have longer ropes the challenge is about the same as the 'final challenge' with buddy ropes. The difference is the group, each person holding onto the rope, must tie one overhand knot between each player. Players can slide along the rope but are not allowed to let go.

**Talking Points:** What sort of planning took place between you and your partner? What planning took place once you were with more people? What makes planning challenging to manage? What sort of discomfort showed up for you during the challenges? How did you manage the discomfort? How was your time management? Did you use your time wisely or did you underutilize your time? How could you have made better use of your time?

## CONVERSE.

### Significant Numbers

**Needs & Numbers:** Have some open space to play – there will be no running around, so this one can be played in a classroom (for example) with desks and chairs around. This pair-n-play works well with 12 to 50 people.

**Process:** Participants pair up - one group of three will work. Each person in the pair puts their hands behind their back and sets a number from 1 to 10 using their available digits. Then, on "1, 2, 3" each person brings out their fingers. For example, Tom brings out six digits and Sally brings out four digits. Tom shares with Sally what significance the number four (Sally's number) has to him (e.g., Tom was born in April) and Sally shares with Tom what significance the number six (Tom's number) has to her (e.g., she has six fish). After they share, both go off to find a new partner. (The easy way to find a partner is to raise a hand and look for someone else doing the same thing.) The same process is repeated with new partners.

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Talking Points: There can be more meaningful connections - what is "meaningful" to each of us? Some deeper (longer) thinking goes into connecting numbers with experience. Participants can work through discomfort while thinking about the connection to the numbers and even feel 'pressure' related to taking so long (e.g., awkward silence).

**“What’s the Quote?” Cards** – Use the quotes generated earlier for one or two conversations. Find all the details, and the print-n-play cards, at this FUNdoing Blog post:  
<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/whats-the-quote-cards-beta-testing-print-n-play>

## **Community** (Closing discussion/conversation)

“What is a community?” (Small group discussion. What shows up from the list below?)

### **A productive community thrives on collaboration, shared values, and effective systems. Here are 10 key characteristics of a productive community:**

1. Clear Goals and Vision: A productive community has a shared mission and set of objectives that guide its members' efforts. Everyone understands the purpose and direction.
2. Open Communication: Transparent and effective communication channels help resolve conflicts, share ideas, and keep everyone informed and engaged.
3. Collaboration and Cooperation: Members work together, pooling resources and expertise, fostering teamwork, and encouraging mutual support.
4. Diversity and Inclusivity: A wide range of perspectives, backgrounds, and skills are valued, promoting innovation and resilience within the community.
5. Strong Leadership and Accountability: Good leaders provide direction, inspire others, and hold people accountable for their roles, ensuring that progress is made.
6. Trust and Respect: Mutual trust and respect among community members create a positive environment, where people feel safe to contribute and take risks.
7. Empowerment and Participation: Individuals feel empowered to take initiative, contribute ideas, and participate in decision-making processes, giving them a sense of ownership.
8. Resourcefulness and Sustainability: The community effectively manages its resources, both human and material, ensuring that projects are sustainable and beneficial in the long term.
9. Problem-Solving and Adaptability: A productive community is adept at addressing challenges, finding creative solutions, and adapting to changes in the environment.
10. Recognition and Reward Systems: Acknowledging contributions and celebrating achievements boosts morale, encourages continued participation, and builds a sense of community pride.

These characteristics help create an environment where productivity thrives, benefiting all members and advancing collective goals. (ChatGPT, 14 Sept. 2024)

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## Closing Activity

### Shakes/Flaps, Winks/Blinks, and Belly Laughs

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.