Seven Very Good Ice Breakers That Teach a Lesson

**1. Selective Perception**: Instruct your audience to count the number of “F’s” in a sentence. Place this sentence on the board or screen: FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS. Allow only 15 seconds.

On average, most people will only spot 3 or 4 of the F’s in the sentence. There are actually six. The brain tends to skip the word “of,” or perceive it as “versus.”

Point: One’s perception may not always be correct.

**2. Sales**: Participants are asked to select an object that they have on their persons. In a small group, everyone is then asked to introduce him or herself and then sell the object to the group. In a large group, individuals are paired and try to sell the object to one another, or “volunteers” are brought to the front to sell the object to the audience. Some of the people will be enthusiastic and creative, others might be reluctant and shy.

Point: How a person approaches a topic often determines how the topic is perceived.

**3. Communication:** Give each member of the group a sheet of paper. Make certain everyone has the same size sheet. Explain that they are to follow instructions precisely, and that they are not allowed to ask questions. AND, they are to follow the instructions with their eyes closed. State the instructions:

1. Fold the paper in half.

2. Rip off a corner.

3. Fold in half again.

4. Rip off a corner.

5. Fold again.

6. Rip off a corner.

Have them open their eyes and compare their “design” with others. You can adapt this to a mixing activity by having everyone mingle looking for designs that are very close to their own.

Point: One-way communication is never as effective as two-way; it gives different results.

**4. Communication/Feedback:** Here you draw a picture of a stick man. Keep it hidden from your audience until later. Make certain everyone has something to write on. Explain you are going to have them draw something by following your verbal directions. They cannot ask questions. Instruct them as follows:

1. Draw a small circle near the top of the page.

2. Now draw a vertical line from the circle to the middle of the page.

3. Now draw to lines from the circle angled down toward the middle of the page.

4. Now draw two lines separating from the single vertical line each of which angles down toward the bottom of the page.

5. At the end of the angled lines stemming from the circle, draw five small lines.

6. At the end of the angled lines stemming from the vertical line, draw an oval at the base of each line.

Now show the picture you constructed and ask them to compare. Naturally, participants will make the point that had they had the opportunity to ask questions, or had they been provided more information, such as a diagram, they would have done better. ALTERNATIVE: Have someone from the group describe your drawing. The drawing can be just a series of shapes.

Point: Using more than one means of communicating is better than a simple one-way method.

**5. Motivator**: Select a wise saying that relates to the theme of your program. For example, if you are talking about the importance of goals and objectives, you might use: “He who aims at nothing is bound to hit.” Now write each word on a separate piece of paper. Wad each piece of paper into a ball. At the session, throw the balls into the crowd and have them tossed about for a few seconds. At an appropriate moment, ask the persons with a ball to hold it and come forward. When everyone with a wadded ball comes to the front of the room, have them open the paper and then organize themselves into a sentence. When they are done, they face the group and hold the papers up so all can read.

Point: Sometimes it takes a bit of work to find a simple truth.

**6. Take Care:** Read the following quiz to your group. Tell them they don’t have to answer, just ponder.

1. Who are the five wealthiest people in the world?

2. Name five winners of the Academy Award.

3. Who are the five most powerful individuals in the world?

4. Name last five winners of the Super Bowl.

5. Name the five richest musicians.

Now, read the next set of questions to them:

1. Name five teachers who have influenced you in a positive way.

2. Name five friends who have helped you in some way.

3. Name five people you care about.

4. Name five people who have brought you joy or make you feel cared for.

5. Name five heroes that have inspired you.

Point: The lesson is obvious: on a personal level, fame, wealth, and achievement pale in comparison to care and compassion.

**7. Visual Reference:** Explain that you want everyone to listen closely and follow directions. They cannot ask questions. Instructions will only be given once. Tell everyone to “place his or her right hand on his or her chin.” However, provide them with a visual cue that is different. Instead of placing your hand on your chin, place the palm of your hand on your cheek. Some people will follow the visual cue.

Point: This illustrates visual dominance. Many people will feel confused, and of course, this illustrates the importance of clear communication. Questions would have resolved the confusion.

**8. Professional or Not?** Ask your audience to take a little scientific test designed to determine if a person is a professional. Have them write their answers down.

1. How do you put a giraffe in a refrigerator?

Correct answer: Open the door and put him in.

2. How you put an elephant in a refrigerator?

Correct answer: Take out the giraffe and put in the elephant.

3. The Lion King is hosting a conference. All of the local animals are in attendance but one. Who is not present?

Correct answer: The elephant, he is still in the refrigerator.

4. You are slated to be the final speaker at the conference. Unfortunately, to get there you have to swim a river inhabited by crocodiles. What do you do?

Correct answer: You swim; all of the crocodiles are all ready at the conference.

Point: A professional looks for the simplest solution (#1). Keeps things simple (#2).

Recalls facts (the elephant is still in the refrigerator and thus can’t go to the conference-#3).

And, uses his/her deductive skills in problem solving (the crocodiles are at the conference- #4). Side note: most four year olds score 100% on this.