



“What’s Up Your Sleeve? Tools that all CHWs Need.”

Icebreakers:

What’s Different, Partner?

Ask everyone to team up with a partner (someone they haven’t met or who has the same color eyes, for example). Ask them to turn back-to-back and change 3-5 things about their appearance, one or more which is very silly. Partners turn around when ready and try to guess the things that have been changed. *This icebreaker gets people to interact with one new person and helps everyone feel comfortable and part of the session. It also shows how observant we really are.*

Silly Sam & Funky Frieda

Ask each participant to choose an adjective that begins with the first letter of their first name and one that really matches their personality. Have participants introduce themselves using their chosen adjective (i.e. Funky Frieda). If time permits, allow time for others to ask questions. *This method of introduction is fun and helps people remember names.*

Dream Vacation

Ask participants to introduce themselves and describe details of the ideal, perfect dream vacation. Two minutes per person is optimal. *This exercise helps us know the likes and dislikes of the participants.*

The Interview

Break the group into two-person teams (assign the teams or have them pick a partner that they know the least about). Have them interview each other for about 5-10 minutes. You can also prepare questions ahead of time or provide general guidelines for the interview. They need to learn where the person is from, their favorite animal, what they like about their jobs, volunteer work, neighborhood, family life, hobbies, favorite sport, etc. (Anything, really!) After the interviews, reassemble the group and have each team introduce each other, using some of the information they received from the interview. *This exercise helps them to learn about each other and takes away some of the awkwardness of introducing ourselves.*

Finish the Sentence

Go around the room and have each person complete one of these sentences (or something similar):

- “I am here today because...”
- “The best thing I ever did for my health was...”
- “I want to get better at...”

This is a good technique for introducing the topic and trying to determine what people want to get out of the presentation.

“The Story” Name Tags

Using colored pencils or crayons, have participants write their name and draw three things that represent themselves. Each participant will introduce themselves and give a brief explanation of the drawings. *This method of introduction helps other participants and the facilitator know what is important to each member.*

Me Bags

Provide each participant with a brown lunch-size paper bag. Instruct each participant to place 3 items (from their purse, calendar, wallet, backpack, or pocket) in the bag. Go around to each participant, have them introduce themselves and the three items they have in their bags. *This exercise helps get to know the individual on a more personal level.*

Toilet Paper

Explain to participants that they will be going out in the woods for the day. Pass around a roll of toilet paper and ask them to take as many sheets as they will need for the full-day trip. Once the toilet paper roll has gone around, instruct the participants that for each sheet of toilet paper they took off, they will need to tell the group one thing about themselves. (This can also be used to review the health topic or subject content). *This is a fun way to get to know other participants in the group.*

Brainstorming:

Team Brainstorming

Ask teams to list: things that are round, things associated with a holiday, things that are red, excuses for speeding, etc. Instruct teams not to discuss, just to list the items! Assign a person to record the information on paper. (This exercise can also be used for the specific health content: things found in a grocery store/produce section, things full of saturated fat, things full of sugar, ways to get exercise, etc.) The team with the biggest list wins. *This activity helps everyone feel equal and sets the stage for activities on the course topics.*

Beach Ball Brainstorming

Announce a topic. Then pass around an inflatable beach ball (Nerf ball, bean bag, etc.). Have everyone stand and pass the ball. When someone catches the ball, they shout out something related to the topic and then toss the ball to someone else. If the group is small, they can pass the ball in a circle chain. *This activity gets people up and moving, and is a fun way to break up the session. It's guaranteed to wake everyone up!*

Games:

The Magic Wand

You have just found a magic wand that allows you to change three of your lifestyle habits. You can change them in any way you'd like. How would you change yourself, your eating habits, level of activity, how you handle stress, etc.? Have them discuss why they feel it's important to make the changes. *This activity helps participants to open up and learn about others' desires and frustrations.*

Marooned

You are marooned on a deserted island. What five (any number will do) items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded. Note that they are only allowed five items per team, not per person. You can have them write their items on a flip chart or on a notepad and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. *This activity helps them to learn about other's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork.*

M&M Game

Make up a question for each color of M&M (any multi-colored candy will do). Participants select a piece of candy and then answer the question based on the color of candy they select. *This is an effective way to ask questions and be sure the participants are learning the content.*

Ball Toss

This is a semi-review and wake-up exercise. Have everyone stand up and form a circle (doesn't have to be a perfect circle). Toss a Nerf ball, beach ball, or bean bag to a person and have them say what they thought was the most important thing they learned today. They then toss the ball to someone and that person explains what they thought was the most important thing they learned today. Continue the exercise until everyone has caught the ball at least once and explained an important thing they learned during the presentation. *This exercise gets people involved in a review of the material that was taught.*

Positive Reinforcement Cards

Whenever a participant asks a good question, answers a difficult question, volunteers for an activity, etc., give them a playing card. At the end of the day, play one hand of poker. However, the only cards that are used are the ones that were given out throughout the day. Give a small prize to the best hand. Note that the more cards a person have, the better the chance of winning. *This is a fun way to celebrate participant's contributions.*

Hot Cabbage / Lechuga Caliente

Write questions pertaining to a health topic or some fun "get to know you" questions on individual sheets of papers. Make a ball out of the questions, crumpling one sheet over the other so it is easy to take off one sheet while the cabbage stays intact. Instruct participants to throw the ball around the group (can use music – like musical chairs). As a person catches it, he/she peels off a layer, reads the question, answers it, and throws it on to the next person.

Grab Bag

Put several objects related to a certain health topic in a bag and have participants choose one object and then discuss that object and its relevance to the health topic. It is handy to have several grab bags on different topics already prepared and in your toolkit ready for use. *This helps to complement what the presenter is teaching; it builds on the participant's knowledge.*

Spin the Bottle

Instruct participants to form a circle. Have questions related to your health topic written on one side of an index card and answers on the other side. One person spins the bottle and reads the question (depending on the literacy level of the group the facilitator may choose to read the question). When the bottle stops the top will point to the person who is to answer the question. *This is an effective way to ask questions and be sure the participants are learning the content.*

One Less Game

Form a circle of chairs for all but 1 person. One person stands in the middle and makes a statement. For example, "I have had my cholesterol checked in the past year." Those who have had their cholesterol checked in the past year change positions, moving to any space other than the one immediately next to him/her. The person left without a chair goes to the center of the circle and makes a statement related to the health topic at hand. Have statements and questions prepared in case participants can't think of one on the spot. *This exercise gets people involved and moving and shows what we have in common.*

Egg Hunt

Write questions about your health topic on little strips of paper. Put a question and a piece of candy in each egg and hide them around. Divide participants into two teams and have each team hunt for eggs. Give them 5-10 minutes to gather the eggs. Bring the two teams back together. Award one point for each egg found and then a point for each question answered correctly. Offer a prize if you wish. *This is a fun way to get people involved and test their knowledge.*

Spider Web

Participants stand/sit in a large circle. One participant shares their name and a statement about him/herself. (If everyone has already been introduced, names aren't required.) The facilitator may ask for statements that serve as an icebreaker or statements that pertain to the health topic at hand. Holding one end of the ball of yarn, the participant then tosses the yarn to another participant on the other side of the circle. Play continues until all participants have introduced themselves. At this point discuss the symbolism of the spider web, i.e. community, being tied together, we must look out for one another. If you have time you can then unravel the spider web by having the last person toss the yarn back to the connecting person while repeating their name and their statement. *Great team building exercise with a review component.*

Alphabet Blocks

Create or purchase alphabet blocks/pictures (i.e. A, B, C, D, etc.). Put the blocks in a bag. Ask each participant to pick one block and using that letter, think of one thing related to the health topic. For example, to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding one's baby: The participant picks an "A" and says, **A**lways the right temperature, or the participant picks a **W** and says, **W**eight returns to pre-pregnancy weight more quickly. *This is a good way to introduce or review the health topic and to build on the participant's knowledge.*