



Opening Activity Ideas

When you bring people together, it is helpful to consider the purpose, the context, and the audience. These are some suggestions on ways to bring people together.

You are not **limited** by what's here - you may have experienced great ones in the past, or read some good ones. Include them in your practice.

If you want to bring diverse voices into the room:

- **Consider a circle.** This gives everyone an opportunity to make themselves heard. There are many cultures with circles as tradition, so consider their way of hosting a circle, so if there are fellow hosts from that tradition, you can invite them.
- **Consider the option of starting in smaller groups, too!** This allows for a more intimate conversation with each other. If helpful, you can bring them back together in a large group to share back.
- **Consider using prompts:** reflection cards, images, objects, or powerful questions to center the conversation.

If you want a way for people to get to know each other:

- **Consider a question that helps you learn about the person that is also relevant to the topic.** For example, tie the topic back to childhood memories, something that engages the five senses, a favorite moment/person/quote/etc. Consider both the universality and the uniqueness of stories that may emerge. Be mindful of how it is phrased.
- **Consider a networking activity.** You can get people to meet each other rapidly in succession, or get them to find out what's in common among themselves.
- **Consider a show-and-tell.** People can bring an item that answers a prompt, and share its significance in a circle. Don't forget to send the reminder ahead of time.

If you want something movement-based or ways that engage the senses:

- **Consider your own physical practices.** Simple stretches, Yoga, Tai Chi, pilates, and dance moves are great ways to get started. Or do a "shake it off" moment together!
- **Consider building or creating something, together or individually.** You can use methods such as impromptu theater, drawing or making craft, making rhythm/beats with claps, and so forth. You can get them to engage in the marshmallow challenge (building the tallest structure using marshmallows and spaghetti).
- **Consider starting with a meal** to enable transition into a space, and have participants reflect on something together.



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If you want something to ground the group:

- **Read a poem together.** Choose a poem that relates to the topic. Take turns reading one line each, and let the voices resonate in the room.
- **Consider a question that gets to why the group chooses to show up.** What is the importance of the topic? What is at stake?
- **Consider a question that gets to the importance of the relationship.** What will be missing if we choose to not do this together?
- **Consider a moment of silence.** Sometimes that is powerful and much needed in a hectic world. Take a deep breath (or a few) together in a guided manner.

If you want to create a welcoming transition environment as they arrive:

- **Consider music.** Use a playlist that creates the mood you are looking for, or reflects the group you are convening.
- **Consider the ambiance.** How might there be ways to make it more welcoming? Quotes, photos, table cloths, fidget items or table décor, variety of chairs or ways to be present, refreshments, are some ways to consider.
- **Allow time for people to arrive and transition.** Oftentimes people are coming in from other responsibilities in their lives. Giving them time to transition means they get to be in a deeper frame of self to engage in what you have in store!

What other opening activities have you seen or experienced in the past? Take a moment to write down memorable ones.

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