

Speed Dating Your Way to a Connected Staff Community

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For me, new staff, especially those who were not campers or have any other connection to camp (or your group) are a big concern. I want to make sure these folks don't get lost in the shuffle of the first day of staff orientation. I also want them to start making connections to other people. This activity will give them the opportunity to speak with several other people one on one.

Set Up

To begin, give each participant a sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper and have markers available. Ask them to make a nametag like this:

3 Things You Like to Do	Place You'd Like to Visit
Name Pronouns	
Something You're Looking Forward to This Week	A Superpower You'd Like to Have

Use whatever questions/prompts you want, but I'd encourage them to be low risk and things that can be answered fairly quickly. We're not looking for in-depth conversations quite yet.

I use this as an activity for staff to do as they're arriving on the first day of orientation. It not only gives them something to do, but it will save time later when it's time for the activity. I typically have a sample of the nametag, along with the supplies (paper and markers) on several tables in the area where we do staff check-in.

If you're going to have everyone make their nametags at the same time, it's helpful to have a sample on newsprint so they can remember the questions.

The Activity

When it's time to begin, give each person a short (4") piece of masking tape. Have them make a loop with the tape, with the sticky side out. Instruct them to attach the tape to the back of their nametag (the top middle of the nametag works best), then stick the nametag on their back. I use the back so people with breasts don't feel like they're being ogled.

Now instruct the group to mill about the space and read each other's nametags. Ask them to do this without speaking. You'll almost certainly have to remind them several times to not speak.

After they've had several minutes to read nametags, ask them to find a partner that they don't know, or don't know well. I usually encourage them to choose someone who had an answer that intrigued them. Ask each pair to sit together, as far away from other pairs as possible.

Tell the group that they're going to spend some time getting to know their partner. Ask for a volunteer in each pair to go first. They should indicate who is going first by raising their hand. Tell them you're going to give them 30 seconds to discuss their answer on the top left corner of their nametag.

-It's important to stress that only the first person should share in this 30 seconds time period. If they don't take the whole time, their partner can ask follow-up questions.

After the 30 seconds is up, call time and tell the group it's now time for the second person to share their answer. Again, if they finish early, follow up questions are encouraged, but keep the focus on the speaker.

When the 30 second time period is up, call time and get the group's attention. You may be interrupting some folks, but that's okay. We want to keep this moving along.

Now tell the group you're going to give them another question, and once again each person will have 30 seconds to answer. Give them a question of your choice and tell them to begin. After 30 seconds, call time, and instruct the second person to share. Continue this process until they've each shared answers to 4 questions.

After the last question, tell them it's time to say good-bye to their partner and find a new partner. Have participants check for confidentiality with their partner, so they don't share they shouldn't.

Repeat this process with the next two corners, then 3-4 more questions each. Each time with a new partner. Remember to check for confidentiality each time.

For the last corner, tell the participants they're going to be with this person a bit longer, so choose wisely. This time, have partners share the last corner and 5-6 questions. When each person has shared for all of the questions, invite each pair to find another pair, making groups of 4.

Introduce Your Partner

Now each person is going to introduce their partner to the new pair. A person should stand behind their partner, placing their hands on the shoulders of their partner (if both are comfortable with this) and introduce their partner by sharing what they learned about them and speaking in the first person. My name is..., My superpower would be... etc. When they are done, their partner can check for accuracy.

This part isn't timed, participants should just take turns going until everyone has had a chance to introduce their partner. When they finish, have them chat among themselves until everyone is done.

Once all the groups are done, give them some sentence stems/prompts and use the whip around method so everyone has a chance to answer. Some examples are:

- What's your favorite ice cream?
- What's your dream job?
- Best gift you've ever received?

Ask as many questions in these groups of 4 as time allows.

Options:

-After groups of 4, combine to groups of eight so people get more comfortable sharing with larger groups.

-Keep the nametags and use them as placemats during staff orientation for meals.

-At the end, have everyone (or in groups of 8) identify two things they all have in common, and one thing that is unique to each person.

I like to have this activity be the last activity of the night, so when it's over, folks can continue conversations and being with each other. Let me know if you have any questions!

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