

# A Touchgroup Guide for Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (The Touchgroup Torah)

Oh hi there, touchgroup leader. Do you have any idea what you're doing? Well, never fear, for here is the ultimate guide to absolutely everything (touch group related). So don't panic, read, and start planning!

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Touchgroups usually consist of a variety of games, discussions, and activities proceeding roughly up the 5 Steps of Community Building:

- Bonding**
- Opening Up**
- Affirming**
- Stretching**
- Deeper Sharing**

This handbook will be split into chapters based on these steps, but don't be afraid to deviate!

## **Touchgroup Leading Basics**

Touchgroup leaders provide safe, small-group environments for conferees. A touchgroup is a place for youth to 'touch base' during events and include (at least) a leader, an advisor, and nine to ten youth. Activities may vary from short games to serious discussions. These groups meet several times over the course of a conference. As a touchgroup leader it's your job to ensure that the group has a fun and meaningful time connecting and creating new friendships.

A large part of being a touch group leader is paying attention to the energy and unique needs of your group. If energy levels are low due to exhaustion or a bad mood, it's up to you

to come up with an activity that both meets the needs of your touchgroup and raises energy levels. Maybe that's a run around game, maybe it's just sitting together and talking--it's your call. However, always remember that a touchgroup is a democracy. If everyone wants to play Scattergories the whole weekend, then that goes.

One of the primary functions of a touchgroup is breaking down cliques and encouraging conferees who may not otherwise notice each other to interact. For this reason, many touchgroups don't ever progress past the affirming stage--and that's ok. It can be hard to achieve that level of closeness and trust in one short weekend. Don't be afraid of intense, emotional discussions, but don't worry if you never get that far! Just go with the comfort level of the group. If you find your touchgroup is ready to skip ahead in the steps, or that they aren't really working at all, you can modify and improvise. Be creative! Switch up activity ideas to meet your touchgroup's needs.

Generally there are five touch group meetings during the span of a conference, usually lasting forty-five minutes to an hour and a half. There should be one on Friday evening, one after every meal on Saturday, and two on Sunday. On either Friday or Saturday one touchgroup slot will be allotted for cleaning the kitchen and/or eating area, and one meeting on Sunday will be designated for the mass cleaning. The second meeting on Sunday should probably be for a closing, but that's up to you as a touchgroup leader.

### **Thing You Should Always Do Always:**

- Plan ahead! Show up to con with back up plans for your back up plans and enough flexibility that you can change it all last minute. Starting your first touchgroup without a plan is not only overwhelming for you, it makes your first meeting less likely to be a fun experience. So PLAN AHEAD!
- During the first meeting, remind everyone of where they can go for brown paper bags, and who they can talk to if they need help or have a problem (touchgroup leader, deans, chaplains, etc.).
- During games or activities with a lot of physical contact, give an alternate way to participate in case anyone is uncomfy. Example: shaking hands instead of hugging.
- Keep in mind our culture of consent and accessibility while planning and playing. Check in with your touchgroup coordinator and/or registrar about whether anyone in your group has a disability, and make accommodations. Remind your group that they can talk to you or a chaplain privately if they have issues with certain types of games or activities.
- Every touchgroup will have cleaning duty at least twice if not more, and as a touchgroup leader it's your job to keep your touchgroup on task and make sure your assignment comes out sparkling like pure, unadulterated, cleanly bliss. Find out when you're cleaning, what you'll need to get the job done, and don't be afraid to be mean about it.
- At least once remind everyone that they have the right to pass or step away from an activity.
- Emphasize that touchgroups are a confidential space. Telling other conferees a funny story about something that happened during touchgroups is fine. Telling other conferees about the intense discussion your touchgroup had or how someone broke down is definitely on the not cool list.
- **If you have any questions about anything, ask your friendly touchgroup**

**coordinator. Their job is to help you, and they are always experienced, gorgeous touchgroup leaders.**

**Things You Should MaybePossiblyProbably Do:**

- During your first meeting talk about what a touchgroup is and why it's important.
- Check-in at every meeting with names and how everyone is doing. During your first meeting you could ask the group to state where they're from and a fact about themselves.
- When your touchgroup has reached a point where they're comfortable with each other, leading a short meditation or light worship can go a long ways towards deepening bonds, even more so if you discuss the meditation/worship afterwards.

**Things You Should Never Do Ever:**

- Leave your touchgroup without a leader. If you need to leave for a few minutes, chances are nothing will explode, but leaving the group without a leader for an entire touchgroup slot is on the risky side. If for some reason you're going to miss touchgroups, assign a new leader (from your group) and notify everyone in your touchgroup that you'll miss touchgroup time and who the stand-in leader is.

**Bonding**

The first step in building community is to break down the cliques and barriers that exist, and to establish a relationship of trust among the individuals in the group. Start with some form of introductions, or a getting-to-know-you activity. Providing space for members to learn about each other creates opportunities to find common interests and connect.

A problem-solving task or other activity that requires group members to work side by side can create communal bonds. As they discuss solutions and help one another accomplish the goal, group members transcend their diverse backgrounds. Cooperation is the goal. As each person's input is accepted and welcomed by others, they begin to identify themselves as part of the team.

Bonding Games accomplish their goal best when the whole group plays together. This is the time for the generating of collective energy, not for intimacy. Keep everyone in one place and keep them busy, so that old friends will not be tempted to be exclusive with each other. If you are successful, newcomers will feel welcome and accepted, and will start to perceive how they fit into the group.

**Activity/Game Ideas:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Mural/Collage</li><li>○ Light Power Shuffle</li><li>○ Footloose</li><li>○ Hog Call</li><li>○ All My Friends and Neighbors</li><li>○ Teapot</li><li>○ Spot</li><li>○ Covenant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Fruit-Basket</li><li>○ Whert</li><li>○ Oobleck</li><li>○ Red Light/Green Light</li><li>○ Pelvis Ball</li><li>○ Calvin Ball</li><li>○ Boomerang Fish</li><li>○ Elbow Tag</li></ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Human Knot</li> <li>○ Jane Loves John</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Count It Up</li> <li>○ Shoe Twister</li> <li>○ Red Rover</li> </ul>
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### Opening Up

The exercises done in this step should be flexible, so that people can share to whatever degree they feel comfortable. You may want to consider activities that are designed for sharing with limited risk. A group at this stage will generally not share more information than is comfortable to them, but the possibility of deeper sharing isn't unlikely, so you may want to establish loose guidelines by affirming the right to pass and reminding the group about the culture of consent.

Games can involve sharing in more creative ways, with noise and music instead of words, as these can be just as powerful for a group at this stage. Participants should come away from these activities enthusiastic about the deepening friendships they are developing. Incorporate chances for your touchgroup to realize that their personal imperfections and struggles are shared by the group. This is the perfect time for discovering that their uniqueness is not strange but wonderful and that the group accepts and loves them.

#### Activity/Game Ideas:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pie of Life</li> <li>○ Animal Game</li> <li>○ Group Storytelling</li> <li>○ Outright Lie</li> <li>○ Puzzled Connections</li> <li>○ Snowball</li> <li>○ Lemons</li> <li>○ Two Truths and A Lie</li> <li>○ Scar Stories</li> <li>○ Mirror Games</li> <li>○ Candy Introductions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Know-it-Ball</li> <li>○ Pudding Game</li> <li>○ House Memories</li> <li>○ One and Only</li> <li>○ Madame X</li> <li>○ Bump</li> <li>○ Rhythm Jam</li> <li>○ Dealing Stories</li> <li>○ Secret Friends</li> <li>○ Hot Tub</li> <li>○ Picture Telephone</li> </ul>
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### Affirming

The act of encouraging each other through affirmation is crucial to the growing process of a group. When a young man's peers compliment him, he feels more confident in himself in relation to the group and can share deeper feelings. When friends tell a young woman that they appreciate her, she realizes that she is worthy of love and praise. Many reclusive youth become active members of the group when they realize others care about them. Participants in affirming interactions leave feeling warm and fuzzy about the group and themselves. This feeling is especially crucial at this stage of the community building process. After opening up, people need positive feedback before they will consider sharing further. It is important to remember that adult leaders and advisers are an integral part of the community building process and they need affirmation just like everyone else. (Note: many of the principles and activities used in this is stage can and should be adapted for the Deeper Sharing stage, where affirmation

is just as important.)

Activity/Game Ideas:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Bedtime Story</li><li>○ Affirmation Tag</li><li>○ Affirmation Mailboxes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Fame Tags</li><li>○ You da Schmoopy Poo</li><li>○ Affirmation Cards</li><li>○ Back Massage Circles</li></ul>
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**Stretching**

Since touchgroups are generally together for only a short period you may not want to wait for a stretching experience to surface on its own. It is sometimes necessary to initiate one. Stretching exercises reap many benefits. When people move beyond their normal comfort level they experience the greatest potential for growth. Group members facing struggles together must actively care for each other. Individuals cannot merely say they care for each other in a stretching exercise; they must actively show it. They must create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable enough to expose their imperfections to the group.

Through a simple stretching exercise, individuals also realize they can achieve much more as a group than they could as a collection of individuals. They realize the importance of each member to the entire group. Facing and overcoming programmed difficulties give young people the confidence that they can cope with the everyday problems they face. They learn that they can accomplish more than they thought possible, if they believe in themselves. It is vital to conclude stretching exercises with a talk-back or open-ended discussion of what just happened. If the time is right, these discussions will lead right into deeper sharing of the issues that came up for individuals and for the group.

Activity/Game Ideas:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Trust Walk</li><li>○ Forest Trail</li><li>○ Human Scavenger Hunt</li><li>○ Powershuffle</li><li>○ Lap Game</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Trust Fall</li><li>○ Trust Carry</li><li>○ Breaking Stereotypes</li><li>○ Human Machine</li><li>○ Space Ship Catastrophe</li></ul>
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**Deeper Sharing**

At this stage, structured activities are not as necessary. The group will have the confidence and communication skills to come up with their own activities. They are probably comfortable just hanging out. However, a few of the opening up activities, as well as the ones below, can help allow space for the kind of sharing this group is capable of.

At this stage, individuals share deeply with one another and the touchgroup becomes a setting where people can express their visions of the future and present struggles. The group will not laugh at or condemn its members if they admit they flunked a test, or that they dream of becoming a U.S. senator, or that they have a drinking problem.

When a group member shares a problem, the rest of the group gives support and encouragement by expressing sympathy. The group can help the individual talk through

possible solutions and goals. The group holds the individual accountable for his or her decisions, remaining supportive throughout the process.

It is important to keep in mind that not all of a person's thoughts are appropriate to share in a group setting. A person should be discouraged from telling the entire touchgroup details of her life that might hurt another member of the group. She should be encouraged to share these struggles on a one to one basis, and in these conversations come up with a suitable way to bring it to the group.

This is also the perfect stage to lead a short worship or meditation, and powershuffles can be made with more intense questions.

**Game/Activity Ideas:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hand Grok</li> <li>○ Guess Who?</li> <li>○ Lottery Questions</li> <li>○ Back to Back</li> <li>○ God in the Dark</li> <li>○ Fishbowl</li> <li>○ Raps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are you afraid of?</li> <li>○ Love/Hate</li> <li>○ Life Line</li> <li>○ Recent Dreams</li> <li>○ Geography of the Self</li> <li>○ Emoticons</li> <li>○ Powershuffle</li> </ul>
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**Energy Breaks**

Energy Breaks are quick games to release tension and lift the mood. Use them as icebreakers, transition activities, or just a way to pass the time.

**Game/Activity Ideas:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tone Singing</li> <li>○ Social Justice Stretching</li> <li>○ Zoom</li> <li>○ Seek Bananas</li> <li>○ Wizard Fight</li> <li>○ Shoe Twister</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Acorn/Tree</li> <li>○ Group Sneeze</li> <li>○ Oomwah!</li> <li>○ Shake By Numbers</li> <li>○ Vegetable Off</li> <li>○ Red Rover</li> </ul>
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**Closing and Meditation/Worship Ideas**

For one of your touchgroup meetings you may want to lead a worship or meditation. These are best done when the group has reached the deeper sharing stage, but they can also be used knit the group even tighter together. If you feel like your group has plateaued at the affirming stage, a short worship or meditation can immediately bring the group closer together and open the forum for new discussions and deeper sharing. However, remember that a touchgroup is not always the place for a deep worship, and remember that you'll have to keep it short.

If you decide that your group could benefit from a worship or meditation, you're going to have to primarily rely on your own experiences to decide what's appropriate for the space and will fit your groups needs. For this reason a more inexperienced con attendee should probably

stick to guided meditations and discussions until they've attended several worships and have an idea of how to plan and modify one for a touchgroup. Activities such as God in the Dark or Powershuffles can also be used as meditations and/or worships. Any worship or meditation should probably be followed by a discussion or an affirming activity.

A meaningful closing has become an integral part of touchgroups, and there are a variety of ways to plan one. You can modify an affirmation activity such as fame tags or affirmation cards. You can lead a discussion of the conference or modify a game like Candy Introductions using topics such as "your favorite part of con", "your favorite part of touchgroups" or "something you learned during touchgroups." You can use yarn to create an interconnected web between participants and incorporate affirmations and memories. If you use an interconnected web activity than group members can take home a piece of the string used.

Many touchgroup leaders prefer to use a bead closing. This requires that either a Conference Co Coordinator or a Dean (ask them!) provide touchgroup leaders with beads and string, or a touchgroup leader buy some themselves. Each member can be given a single bead, or each member can decorate enough beads for the entire group to have one from all the participants. Members can take beads for specific topics, such as a new friend they made or something they learned.

Remember, you can and should improvise and modify activities to fit your group's needs. Mix and match the activities discussed here, or dump them entirely and try something new!

## **Cleaning**

As a touchgroup leader, you are responsible for making sure your touchgroup does both its meal cleaning assignment, and its end of con cleaning assignment. This does not have to be the worst thing to happen since the invention of agriculture, though. Your goal should be to have a sparkly, exciting, bonding and EFFICIENT AND THOROUGH AS ALL FUCK cleaning.

First off, you need to know what and when your group is cleaning. On the very first night, look at the giant sign your touchgroup coordinator has made and see if your cleaning assignment is there. If not, go bother the touchgroup coordinator or a dean. Do not bitch if you get assigned to cleaning up some insanely messy dinner or other difficult task. Someone has to do it, and the challenge creates a great opportunity for your touchgroup to bond.

Ask the cooks for help. Try not to be impatient or demanding about this, because cooking for a hundred teenagers will leave anyone frazzled as all Valhalla. Talk to a cook who isn't busy stirring anything or yelling at anyone. Ask them what you should/should not clean, if they'll be working on anything, and if there are any pots/pans they need cleaned right away.

Identify a member of the church you're at, hopefully within your own touchgroup (or borrow one for a sec.) They can point out cleaning guides, the location of supplies, and any weird characteristics of the kitchen.

During the cleaning, give everyone something to do and avoid having people mill around aimlessly. If there isn't much to do, send half your touchgroup outside, then make them switch in for the scrubbers/sweepers/dishwasher loaders after a bit. You should also be cleaning yourself, not just barking orders. DO NOT let anyone skip cleaning unless they're terribly sick or with a chaplain. Most likely you can turn on music, and the whole touchgroup can sing as they make the kitchen fabulous again, like Disney princesses.

You may be partnered with another touchgroup for you cleaning assignment. Communicate

with the leader/s of the other touchgroup! Make sure you're all on the same page. You may want to have one touchgroup clean for half the allotted time, then switch out with the other group. If you have both the kitchen and the eating area to clean, assign touchgroups to work separately on these rooms. Twenty people can clean a kitchen a lot faster than ten, but you also run the risk of being packed like sardines with only a few people working and everyone else standing around, so stay aware of who's doing what, how long they've been doing it, and if there's anyone they can switch out with

When you're cleaning part of the church on the last day of the conference, shake off your sleep deprivation and get cracking. It is crazy important that the church be shiny, because we do not pay to have our cons there--they let us use their space out of the goodness of their hearts. If we leave a church a hot mess, they're likely to not let us hold a conference there again, and chances are they'll spread the word to other churches.

The deans will usually be the ones to tell you where you'll be cleaning. If you are finished cleaning your area (input from the locals is really helpful here), send your touchgroup to help another, or find odd jobs that no one's been assigned to. If something look untidy, don't ask questions, just clean it. If you aren't sure what areas need help, ask the deans or the touchgroup coordinator.

### **Game/Activity Descriptions**

Descriptions are listed in alphabetical order.

**Acorn/Tree:** Form a standing circle. Have everyone gradually crouch down, making themselves as small as possible. As they do this, have them say, "Acorn, acorn, acorn..." getting softer and softer. Then, simultaneously jump up into the air and say "TREE!!" with enthusiasm. Do this one several times to energize a tired group.

**Affirmation Cards:** Each person in the group writes their name on the top of a sheet of paper. They pass it to their right, and people write affirmations about them under their name. Woohoo! At the end of this activity, everyone has a pageful of warm fuzzies to bring home.

**Affirmation Mailboxes:** Everyone in the group decorates a little bag or tissue box with their name on it. There's paper and art supplies so everyone can make cool stuff and write sweet notes to their touchgroupers. Good for shy people, artistic people, people who love getting mail...The boxes/bags stay out during the con so they can be added to.

**Affirmation Tag:** Tell the group to spread out in the space. Designate one person to be "it". "It" chases the other players around the space. When they catch one of group members, everyone else must freeze while the "It" person describes something they love about the person they have caught. Then the affirmed person becomes "it" and chases after someone else. The object of this game is for everyone to get tagged.

**All My Friends and Neighbors:** (Some people are differently abled and this game can be exclusive if played by running around. Slowing the game down will help keep it accessible. Try pretending you are stuck in a giant vat of (vegan!) Jello. It allows most everyone to play and it's

so much fun making the Jello noises. Or you could just play in slow motion!) Materials: enough chairs for all members of the group minus one, and no more. Have the group sit in a circle of chairs. "It," who doesn't have a chair, goes to the center and picks something about themselves she might have in common with other members of the group. They say something like, "I like people who...have ever dyed their hair a color of the rainbow." Everyone to whom this applies must jump out of their chairs and find another chair (not either of the chairs next to them), a la musical chairs. The person remaining after all the chairs are taken makes the next statement, "I like people who... are at their first conference." For added madness: seated members can make eye-contact with each other across the circle and switch seats before "It" has made their statement. If "It" perceives this happening, they can quickly try to steal a vacant seat, leaving a new "It" in the center. Variation: Choose slightly more meaningful categories, and everyone to whom they apply comes to the center of the circle, holds hands, and gives themselves a cheer before they rush to find another seat.

Animal Game: Distribute the paper and pencils. Each person writes down in secret what kind of animal they would like to be, and in what setting. Example: A dragonfly skimming the surface of a creek in the sunshine. The papers are folded, collected, and mixed up. One person reads each paper aloud and the group decides who wrote it and gives it to them. Some people may receive more than one and others none at all. Then go around the circle and have each person read the paper that they have been given and give them back to their original authors. Variation: each person decides what animal they feel like right now.

Back Massage: The group forms a circle and gives the person to their right a back massage. Pretty simple! Make sure everyone in your group is comfortable with the activity.

Back to Back: Let the group choose an interesting issue or subject for a conversation. Break the group into pairs and let them find an isolated space for themselves. Tell them to sit back-to-back with their partner, and take turns talking- -saying whatever comes to their mind on the subject-- for two minutes each. Variation: While one person describes their favorite place in the world or in their imagination, the other person draws what they are hearing on the paper. Come back to the group and talk about this conversation. Variation: Give both partners paper and crayons. Concentrate on drawing the same picture without looking. Compare drawings after a time.

Bedtime Story: Invite everyone to a late night story-reading. Encourage them to wear their pajamas and to bring stuffed animals and blankets. Arrange pillows in a circle on the floor. Pick a new or familiar children's story to read (other short stories are great, too), and pass around the book so that others have a chance to read. Make sure everyone can see the pictures! Close by singing a lullaby and passing out cookies and milk.

Boomerang Fish: "It" stands in the center of the room with the "fish," spins and lets it fly. She makes up a rule to apply whenever the fish lands in the same corner of the room in the future. Some examples: When the "fish" lands in Corner 1: Everyone pair up and piggy-back, and have a chicken-fight with everyone else. The last pair left standing gets to be "it." Corner 2: The present "it" gets to tell everyone else what to do. Corner 3: "It" closes their eyes and everyone

else hides. The last person they find gets to be “it.” Corner 4: “It” relinquishes their “itdom” to the person of their choice. Center: The first person to grab the “fish” gets to be it. As the rules are created by successive “its,” everyone has to memorize and follow them.

**Breaking Stereotypes:** Sit or stand in a circle. Ask the group to think of human categories that they fall into and the stereotypes normally associated with these categories. Some examples are: woman, queer, white, student, sister, poor, short. Then ask them to think of ways in which they do not fit into the stereotype. Ask them to voice what they are thinking about when they feel moved to speak. Give an example by making your own statement: “I’m a blond but I’m not stupid,” or “I’m a mother but I have my own life.” Let the sharing continue until everyone has spoken. Variation: Pass out the cards and pencils. Give everyone a few minutes to write down adjectives that they feel describe them as part of a group like young, Irish, straight, or punk. Go around the circle reading out the cards. Choose someone to facilitate a discussion about people’s reactions to the words on the cards.

**Bump:** When the music starts, players take a walk around the space, changing directions so that they occasionally bump into other bodies. When the music stops, each player greets the nearest person and discovers as much personal information as possible about them before the music starts up again (five to seven seconds). If two people are paired up more than once, tell them to find out something new about the person each time. Keep it moving quickly until a good number of people have been acquainted.

**Calvin Ball:** Materials: a beach ball, frisbee, baseball and bat, tennis racket and ball, or whatever assorted sports equipment you can find.

This game has a few more rules than the one Calvin and Hobbies play, but it can be just as open to improvisation. Divide the group into 2 equal teams, called the Batters and the Fielders, and have each team stand in a loose circle opposite the other. Elect a referee to stop anything dangerous and to call for the teams to switch. When teams switch, the new Batters can make up new rules, but here are some to start: Fielders choose a pitcher, who can choose which item he is going to throw. Batters are up to “bat” (or catch and throw) one at a time. When the ball is hit, the batter must run around the entire group of Batters, while the pitcher retrieves the ball and it is passed through the legs of the entire group of Fielders. The last fielder to receive the ball holds it up and yells “Stop!” to the batter. The Batters goal is to accumulate as many complete “runs” as possible.

**Candy Introductions:** Acquire a bag of candy (preferably vegan so everyone in the group can partake of the deliciousness) wherein there are many different flavors or colors. Tell the group they can take as many pieces as they want! Once everyone has several pieces, tell them there’s a catch. They can’t eat their candy until they tell a story for every piece they have. Assign different story topics based on flavor or color.

Example:

- Red – Favorite hobbies
- Green – Favorite place on earth
- Blue – Favorite memory
- Yellow -Dream job

- Orange – Wildcard (tell us anything about yourself!)

Count It Up: Stand in a circle with your hands behind your back. Your goal is to count to ten together. Only one person should speak at a time. If someone says the wrong number or speaks over someone else, start over.

Covenant: A covenant is an agreement written by two or more people as to how they behave and treat each other, or operate as a group. This can include anything from “treat others with kindness and respect” to “spin in a circle every time someone says conference”. A covenant is generally used to outline behavioural guidelines for a group, the difference from rules being that the group writes it together and comes to a consensus on what they think is important.

Dealing Stories: Gather the group into a circle and deal a card to each person. The card they receive will determine how many stories and what kind of stories from their lives they will tell the group. You can decide on these designations before-hand. Here are some suggestions:

- Hearts: love story
- Clubs: funny story
- Spades: sad story
- Diamonds: made up story
- Ace: the story that shows off their best qualities
- King: a story about power
- Queen: a story about liberation / justice making
- Jack: a story about someone named Jack.

Go around the circle and hear everyone’s story, then re-deal the cards.

Elbow Tag: You need an even number of people for this game, or one person who’s willing to sit out. Tell everyone to find a partner, and have them link elbows, then arrange them in a circle or scattered haphazardly. One pair contains the “it” person and a runner. The goal of this game is to always be linked to a partner, while avoiding being tagged and becoming “it”. The runner runs from the “it” person and links elbows with someone who already has a partner, thus becoming safe. The person who’s elbow they didn’t take is no longer safe and must run to a different pair and repeat the process. Anyone without a partner can be tagged and become “it”. To switch it up have two “it”s and two runners.

Emoticards: Pass out the cards and writing implements. Tell everyone to write down an emotion (not necessarily one they are currently feeling). Encourage them to be specific, and to use whatever word occurs to them, even if it is not traditionally the name of an emotion. Distrust, joy, befuddlement, impossible, excitement, destroy, lavender, bubble--all of these words are fine. Collect the cards and deposit them in the middle of the circle. Play some soft music and invite everyone to go to find a card that describes how they are feeling right now. Once all the cards are claimed, invite a few or all members of the group to share their emotions and explain why they chose them

Fame Tags: Pass out the cards and markers, and tell the group to write their names on the

cards. For each letter in their names, have them identify a positive ability or quality they possess that others remember them by, for which they are “famous.” Record all these words on the cards. Pass around the hole-puncher and yarn so that they can make name-tags of their cards and wear them. Variation: Make Super Hero tags. Have each person identify the special quality that they bring to the group and make a Super Hero title out of it, i.e. “Jen, Energizer, Battling the Powers of Complacency,” or “Marc, Smooth-Talker, with Incredible Force-field of Sunshine.”

Fishbowl: Break the group into two or three subgroups who have something in common with each other. For example: Adults/Youth, male/female/transgender, BGLTQQ/straight, etc. Have the two groups meet separately and come up with three to four questions for the other group. Reconvene and exchange cards. Form two circles, one subgroup inside the other, both facing in. Have the inside group read a question and have a discussion about it. The outside circle cannot speak, only listen. Go through each question, making sure everyone in the inner circle has a chance to speak. Then reverse circles.

Footloose: Have everyone in the group take off their left shoe and throw it into a pile in the center of the circle. Tell everyone to find a new left shoe from the pile. Once everyone is wearing a mismatched pair, tell them to find the two people wearing the shoes that match theirs. When they find them, have them stand with their feet crossed over so that right and left shoes are matched up all the way around the circle. With a little maneuvering, the group should be able to form one circle.

Forest Trail: Remember anyone can opt out if they don't feel comfortable. This, like other activities has the ability to trigger those who have experienced trauma. Make sure you explain the activity so people know what they are getting into. Have the group form a double line with people facing each other and standing about three feet apart. Have them extend their arms forward and imagine that they are trees in a forest. Then have one person stand at the end of the aisle, close their eyes and start walking through. They must get through the interweaving of branches in order to proceed through to the other side. Sometimes the branches may be stiff and require a firm push to get past, other times they are as soft as ferns. When they reach the end, they can open their eyes, return to one of the lines and become part of the forest. Let everyone have a turn.

Fruit-Basket: Have the group sit in a large circle on the floor. Tell them each to pick a fruit (Variation: choose any category) and go around the circle once, each person calling out the fruit they have chosen. “It” goes to the center of the circle and picks another person by saying “Kiwi (that person's fruit), who do you love?” “Kiwi” picks another person by saying, “Kiwi loves Plum.” “It” has to remember who “Plum” is and run over to him before he can say “Plum loves Guava.” If he succeeds in touching someone before they can say who they love and redirect his course, that person becomes it. Variation: “The Pillow Game” uses a pillow or scarf to do the tagging. One additional rule: no throwing the pillow. Variation: This version is done with sign-language and in complete silence (except, of course, for shrieks and giggles). Have each person to choose a physical gesture to represent themselves. Instead of saying “Kiwi loves Plum,” the person who

starts it out demonstrates their sign, then the sign for love (crossed arms over the chest with hands in fists), then someone else's sign.

**Geography of the Self:** Break the group into pairs and have partners trace one another's bodies on their sheets of butcher paper. Then have each person work separately to turn their body into a map. Pose some questions: Where are the boundaries of your body? Where are the populated areas? Your depressed inner cities? Your deserts? Your rivers? Your mountains ranges? Cliffs? Jungles? Which territories are at war with each other? Where are your main roads? Where are your uncharted lands? Your frontiers? Give each person a chance to share their map or display them around the room.

**God in the Dark:** In a darkened space, have the group lie on the floor facing up. Ask the group to pose anonymous questions to the ceiling. Heavy philosophical questions are good, as are more personal ones. Here are some good ones: Suppose you have a magic box. It can be any size or shape. In it can be anything you want that would make you happy. What is in your box? Suppose a doctor had just told you that you have only one year left to live. What would you do differently? How would you change your life? Let the answers come from anyone who feels moved to speak.

**Group Sneeze:** Sneeze out all the negative energy with this one. Divide the group into 3 sections. Assign the word "Russia" to one, "Prussia" to another, and "Massachusetts" to third. Have everyone sneeze their word loudly at the same time.

**Group Story Telling:** Sit in a circle. Start telling a story. When you reach a critical point, break off and let the person sitting on your right take over. Keep the story going until someone finds a way to end it. Variation: Have a few people in the middle pantomiming the story as it is told.  
**Writing:** Arrange the group in a circle. Distribute paper and pencils. Have each of them start a story on their sheet of paper, introducing the main character(s), the setting, and an introductory action. Give them about five minutes and then ask them to pass the story on to the person to their left. Let the stories be passed around until each person has contributed to each story. Then have the person who started the story finish it. Let the originators of each story share theirs with the group. Variation: (for any size group) Write down the beginning of a story in two lines, then fold the paper over so that only the second line is showing. Pass it around the circle with instructions to add two lines and refold the paper so that only the last line is showing. Read the whole story at the end.

**Guess Who?:** Arrange the group in a circle. Pass out the paper and pencils. Give everyone five minutes to write on a predetermined topic (recent dreams, childhood, a day in my life). Gather the papers and pass them back out. Go around the circle and read the papers, guessing who wrote them. Then go around again and reveal the true authors.

**Hand Grok:** Have the group spread out around the room and close their eyes. Pair people up by leading them by the hand across the room to the partner you have chosen for them, while everyone's eyes remain closed. Pair people that know one another in the context of the group,

but may never have had the chance to bond on a personal level. Tell the partners to sit and spend time holding one another's hands. Ask them to communicate with one another in silence, through touch alone. Let this process continue for 10 minutes or longer. Then have the group members open their eyes and talk to one another about what they learned about one another through the exercise.

**Hog Call:** Have the group split up into pairs and come up with a matching set of words or sounds (i.e. "hic-cup," "peanutbutter," or "honey-bee"). Have each person choose one of the words as their own. Then have each person announce their word to the group, so that there are no repeats. Then instruct the group to close their eyes and start milling around the space with the goal of getting as far away from their partner as possible. Once the pairs are well-separated, announce that they are to find their partners without opening their eyes, by shouting their word. (If all goes well, Peanut will meet up with Butter).

**Hot Tub:** Everyone in the group writes a question (silly, philosophical, personal, whatever) and the whole group answers it going around in a circle. Right to pass is respected. This is great for a mellow group, and can be done in cuddle puddles. Variation: Someone asks a question, and going around the circle everyone answers it, until the person who asked the question gets the chance to answer. Then the person to their right asks a question, and the process is repeated.

**House Memories:** Ask everyone to draw the floor plan of a house they lived in before they were ten years old. Have them label each room to the best of their memories. Then ask the group to share individually or in pairs about the memories associated with each room, especially their own. Variation: ask everyone to design the ideal room for themselves. Encourage them to add as much detail as possible, and incorporate childhood fantasy. Share the designs and reasons behind their choices.

**Human Knot:** Arrange group members in a circle, standing shoulder to shoulder. Tell everyone to put their right hand up in the air, and then grab the hand of someone across the circle from them. Everyone then puts their left hand up in the air and grabs the hand of a different person. Check to make sure that everyone is holding the hands of two different people and that they are not holding hands with someone directly next to them. Tell group members to untangle themselves to make a circle without breaking the chain of hands. If group members break the chain they start over.

**Human Machine:** The object is to build a moving, churning, humming human machine. Have one person start with a motion, and noise to go with it, in the center of the room. When someone feels moved to do so, he can go to her and become a part in the machine, with a motion that interacts with the first and a sound that fits rhythmically. Let the machine grow until every person is in place. Then pick one person and whisper in her ear to begin malfunctioning, to get off the beat or start blocking another person's motion. Let the machine slowly break down until everything is utter cacophony. Then quiet the group down and talk about what happened.

**Human Scavenger Hunt:** This is a good game to lead into a discussion of diversity. Come up

with a list of statements ranging from silly to meaningful, that could pertain to the people in the group. Some examples are “I have seen more than fifty Simpsons episodes,” or, “I don’t believe in God.” Make sure at least some of them will only pertain to a few people, if any. Write out the statements and leave a blank space next to each one. Distribute the papers among the group members, and tell them to find one person for each statement. You can stop the game before everyone is done, and discuss which spaces were easiest/hardest to fill.

**Jane Loves John:** One person stands in the middle of a circle of the rest of the group (on a chair if they’re short.) They are the tagger, the other members are the lovers. One person (often the leader) starts the game. Let’s call her Jane. Jane would say “Jane loves John” ( John is another member of the group.) John needs to say who he loves before the person in the middle can tap him on the head. If he does get tagged, he is the new tagger.

**Know-it-Ball:** Have the group sit in a circle and give them the balls. The group decides on questions for the three balls to respectively represent. Example: The red ball is the name ball, and whoever catches it must say their name aloud. The blue ball is for one’s hometown. The yellow ball is for a one word description that each person chooses for himself, such as “happy”, “generous”, or “talkative”. Have the group toss the balls back and forth around the circle. After everyone has answered at least a few questions, toss the blue ball around and have the group call out the names of those who catch it.

**Lap Game:** This game is best for people who already know each other. Have everyone find a chair. Explain the game: when someone shouts out a question, everyone will answer without talking, by changing seats. Anyone can call out a question, but it is a good idea to start with funny, mellow questions and proceed to more intense ones. Some examples: “Everyone over 6 feet tall move three seats to the left,” or “Move as many seats to the right as siblings you have.” If there is someone in the seat you move to, sit on their lap.

**Lemons:** Distribute one lemon to each person and sit in a circle on the floor. Tell the group that since no two lemons are the same, they should get to know their lemons. Guide them through this meditative, silent process: Spend the first five minutes with your eyes closed. Explore through touch the unique tactile qualities of your lemon. Pair up. Introduce your lemon to your partner by pointing out its special qualities. Exchange lemons with each other, and notice the difference in the lemons. Now form groups of four to six, and place your lemons in a pile. Close your eyes and find your own lemon. Now form a circle with the whole group. Have one person collect the lemons and redistribute them to different people. Close your eyes, and pass the lemons to the right, feeling each one to find your own. When you’ve found yours, place it aside, and continue passing lemons until everyone has found their own. Variation: instead of lemons use easily distinguishable small objects.

**Life Line:** Have each person draw a vertical line down the middle of their page. At the bottom of the line write “0” and your birth date, at the top write the age you expect to live to, and a date that many years in the future. On the line indicate the age you are now and what you’re doing now. Write in what you would like to be doing five years from now, ten years from now. Group

members can share goals and discuss one other's hopes for the future. You may want to talk about what problems are blocking their achievement, and let the group help each other come up with solutions. Variation: Make the time lines only from birth to the present. Have each person remember pivotal moments in their lives and mark them on the lines.

Light Power Shuffle: A power shuffle with non-threatening type question. Think "I like cats", "I don't like school", "I live in a city." For further directions see Powershuffle.

Lottery Questions: Pass out slips of paper and pencils to all. Have everyone write down a question for the entire group. Ensure that questions fall into the intensity level that is right for the group. Pass around a hat to collect the questions, then pull questions out at random and have the individuals respond.

Love/Hate: Ask the group to sit in a circle and light a chalice. Establish a premise of confidentiality for the conversation. Pose two questions into the silence: "What do you love?," and "What do you hate?" Encourage people to respond to either or both of the questions whenever they feel moved to speak. When the sharing comes to a close, initiate a conversation about love and hate.

Madame X: One person, "It," secretly chooses another person in the group to be Madame X. Go around the circle and give each person in the group a turn to try to find out who "It" is thinking of. They ask questions like, "If Madame X were a color..." or any other category they can think up, and "It" responds. Often, the most creative categories can be the most revealing (and remember, "It" shouldn't respond with the color Madame X is wearing, but the color Madam X is). When the entire group has had their chance to pose a category, go around the circle once more and let each person guess who they think is Madame X. Then let "It" reveal the true identity of Madame X, and have everyone talk about why they guessed who they did, and what answers surprised them.

Mirror Games: Break the group into pairs. Tell pairs to choose one to be the mirror, one to be the actor. Let them start slow, improvising a dance or carrying out a specific action usually done in front of a mirror, like brushing teeth, or checking out their outfit). Tell them to switch after a while. Then introduce new elements: you are a fun house mirror, exaggerating instead of reflecting; you are an opposite mirror. After a while, let them abandon the switching back and forth, and try to initiate movement and reflect the movement of their partner at the same time.

Mural/Collage: Parameters: perfect for a group from 2 to infinity! Materials: Every kind of art supply you can rustle up. Put out the magazines, paints, pencils, paper, scissors and glue, put on some good music (not too loud, so that people can talk), and go for it. Encourage people to make their corner of the project their own, but to interact with and respond to what others are doing. When preparing for this activity, be sure to either bring all your own supplies, or check with the church on what it's alright for you to use. Variation: Create your art in silence. Variation: Offer a topic for the art like "Going home" or "Breaking down the Walls."

**One and Only:** Distribute index cards and pencils. Ask each member of the group to write a fact about their life that others in the group may not know. Advise the group not to reveal anything too personal. Make sure no one signs their names to the cards. Collect the cards, shuffle them and redistribute them. Have each person read aloud the information on the card they are holding. After each reading, let the group try to guess whom the card describes.

**Oobleck:** Materials: cornstarch, water, food coloring, measuring cups and a large bowl. Measure out 1/4 cup of cornstarch for each person in the group. Add five tablespoons of water per 1/4 cup and mix. Add more water little by little until the concoction is malleable. Add some food coloring. This is some crazy stuff to make and play with. When you squeeze it, its dry and hard, but release it and it melts into a puddle. Dive in! Make sculptures and watch them melt. Talk about metaphors for life. Think of new names for the stuff. Read *Bartholemew and the Oobleck* by Dr. Seuss aloud while the group is playing.

**Oomwah!:** Have the group spread out in the space. Tell them to relax their bodies. As the say “Oooooom” have them clench every muscle in their bodies; hands, tummy, faces; until they are in scrunched up little balls. Then, on “Wah!” have them release all of the tension and sprawl out on the floor.

**Outright Lie:** Pass a small object around the circle and make up incredible stories about it. Example: “This necklace was buried in my grandmothers yard in a sealed envelope from an anonymous lover. . .” Vote on the best story and elect the best liar in the group. Variation: explore the places your group has access to and have two to three people pick an object to lie about, choose the winner, and move on to the next object.

**Pelvis Ball:** Form a standing circle. Tell the group you are going to make a ball of energy. Pluck an imaginary particle out of the air and roll it in your hands, making it larger and larger. Once you have patted it into the shape and size you want, place it squarely between your hips. Pass it to someone across the circle by winding up your hips and thrusting the imaginary ball into the air. Watch as it soars through the air and your friend catches it in their pelvis. Remind the group to think about how much the ball weighs, to experiment with sounds to compliment their pelvis action.

**Picture Telephone:** Person 1 draws a small picture at the top of the paper, then passes it to Person 2. Person 2 writes a sentence describing the picture, then folds the paper over so that only the sentence is visible, and passes the paper to Person 3. Person 3 draws a picture of what Person 2 described, without ever seeing the original picture, then folds the paper over so only their picture is visible, and passes the paper on to Person 4. Continue until there’s no more room on the paper.

**Pie of Life:** Ask the group to draw a large circle on a piece of paper. Tell the group that the circle they just drew represents a day in their life. Ask the group to cut slices of the pie to represent the amount of time they spend doing different things. Example: the amount of time you sleep on a typical day, at school, daydreaming, with friends, alone. Have them label their slices.

After the group has finished slicing their life pies, have them share with the group (if they are comfortable). Give each person time to talk about one or more of their slices.

**Powershuffle:** Come up with a list of questions to ask the group that forces its members to make a choice between yes and no. The list should begin with easy, fun questions, like, "Do you consider yourself an artist?" or "Are you a lifelong U. U?", and proceed to more difficult questions like, "Are your parents are married?" or "Do you have prejudices against others?" Depending on how ready the group is, you may want to include even the most challenging choices, such as "Are you a good person?" Explain the exercise to the group. Ask everyone to move to one side of the room. Tell them that you will ask a series of questions and they will choose "Yes" or "No" as their answer to each. The side they are now standing on represents "No," the opposite side of the room represents "Yes." After the question is posed, they will move, in silence, to the "Yes" or the "No" side of the room, to represent their choice. They must choose one side; there is no middle ground. Stand in the front of the room, in the middle of the two walls, to read the questions. Allow time for everyone to make their choice and move to their wall. Once everyone is still, let them look at the people on their side of the room and across at those on the other side, and return to "No" before reading the next question. Close the exercise with a circle sharing, or by lighting candles of celebration and concern.

**Pudding Game:** Break the group up into pairs. Blindfold one member of each pair. Have the blindfolded people attempt to feed the pudding to their partners. Switch. (REMINDER: Blindfolds can be very scary to survivors of assault and other people who have been hurt. Ask to see if everyone is comfortable before you do this activity. You may also want to have a vegan alternative to pudding, depending on the dietary preferences/needs of your touchgroup.)

**Puzzled Connections:** Write a series of non-invasive questions on a bunch of 3x5 card such as, "What is your first childhood memory?", or "What did you dream last night?" Cut the 3x5 cards so that they make a series of unique, two-piece puzzles. Give half of each card to each person and instruct the group to find their "other half." Then have each pair answer the questions on the finished puzzle.

**Raps:** A rap is an intense, confidential discussion about any interesting topic you choose. The only guidelines are: Don't talk about the rap afterwards, speak from the heart, and avoid being repetitive. Generally people sit in a circle and speak as they're moved. They also usually close the door and post a sign saying not to walk in. Examples of topics are: life after death, self-esteem, is the universe conscious, god/goddesses/deities, hip-hop, sexism...

**Recent Dreams:** Ask the group to remember their most recent dream (a guided meditation might bring them to the right state of mind). Have them either draw or write whatever images or feelings they remember from their dream in a stream-of-consciousness style. Then have each member share parts or all of his creation.

**Red Light/Green Light:** Choose one person (the caller) and send them to the far end of the

space. The caller remains stationary, turned away from the rest of the group. When they call "Green light!", the group moves towards them. When they call "Red light!", they have to stop. The caller turns around quickly and if she sees any members of the group still moving, those players have to return to the beginning. The goal of the game is to touch the caller without being seen moving. Variation: Tie the group into pairs with rope and have them hop toward the caller. Try it with one of the pair closing his eyes.

Red Rover: Players form two opposing lines and attempt to "break through" the opposing team's line. At first, two teams are chosen of equal size, and they form two lines, facing each other and holding hands. One side starts by picking a person on the opposing team and saying "Red Rover, Red Rover, send <Marcy> right over!" Marcy then lets go of his teammates and begins a headlong rush for the other line. His goal is to break through the line by overpowering the kid's hold on each other. If Marcy breaks through, she chooses one person for the opposing team to join her team, and they both go back and join in their line. If she fails to break through, Marcy becomes part of the other team. Each team alternates calling people over until one team has all the people and is declared the winner.

Rhythm Jam: Sit in a circle and have one person start a repetitive, rhythmic sound. Go around the circle with each person adding a layer of sound. Use hands, feet or voices-- anything goes. When everyone is making noise, you have a variety of options: have one person be the director, telling folks to get softer or louder, silencing everyone so that she can hear a few voices across the circle from each other and how they sound together. Bring all the voices back up for a grand finale. Or, let everyone jam out to each other, without a director. Variation: make some impromptu instruments out of cans, rubber bands, water jugs, or other found objects before hand.

Scar Stories: Gather into a circle. Show off scars and tell the stories behind them.

Secret Friends: Secretly break the entire group into pairs of "secret friends," and assign each pair a number. Keep a master list! Label one manila envelope with each of the numbers, and give everyone a token or name tag with their number on it. Place the envelopes and the art supplies in a prominent place in the room for the duration of your event. Tell everyone to communicate with their secret friend by leaving messages in the envelope with their number on it. If there is something in the envelope they didn't put there, its for them. Encourage them to tell their secret friend about themselves without betraying their anonymity and not to wear their name tags or reveal their identities to their secret friends until the end of the specified time. Finally, have a dance or worship in which the identities are revealed.

Shoe Twister: Everyone in the group gets into a tight circle, facing the person to their left, with their right foot in the center. One person temporarily sacrifices a shoe for the game. The leader begins the game by tossing the shoe a reasonable distance away, perhaps a few people over. The person to the leader's left must now put their left foot wherever the shoe has landed, without moving his/her right foot. Then that person throws for the person on their left, etc. When it goes all the way around the circle, its repeated but for the right foot. This goes on alternating

left and right until there's a general collapse onto the floor.

Seek Bananas: Sing this song with motions. Order: Do 1, 7, then 1, 2, 7, then 1, 2, 3, 7, etc. until finishing with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

- 1) Seek Bananas. Seek, Seek Bananas (x2) Motion: Hand over eyes, seeking
- 2) Pick Bananas. Pick, Pick Bananas (x2) Motion: Hands out, pulling bananas off tree
- 3) Peel Bananas. Peel, Peel Bananas (x2) Motion: Peeling a banana
- 4) Eat Bananas. Eat, Eat Bananas (x2) Motion: Shove 'em in your mouth!
- 5) Squash Bananas. Squash, Squash Bananas (x2) Motion: Throw banana peel down and stomp on it.
- 6) Go Bananas!. Go, Go Bananas! (x2) Motion: Flailing arms in the air, jumping up and down.
- 7) Mmmmmmmmmmmmm.... bananas. Motion: Rubbing belly and smiling

Shake By Numbers: Tell the group that once they catch on to copy you. Start by shaking your right arm and counting to ten, kind-of quickly. Then shake your left arm and count to ten. Next shake your right leg and count to ten, then shake your left leg and count to ten. Continue in this order but for each set count only to nine, then eight, etc. (think B-I-N-G-O-style) and hopefully quicken the counting each time. Continue until you run out of numbers.

Snowball: Arrange the group in a circle. Pass out the paper and pencils. Have each person write down a question they would like to have another youth answer (emphasize: not too personal). Then, have everyone crumple up their papers and initiate a snowball fight with the balled up paper as ammunition. After this has gone on for a little while, tell everyone to stop and pick up the nearest ball. Un-crumple the balls, and go around the circle answering questions. Variation: Write names on the papers. After the snowball fight, pick up a paper ball and read out the person's name. That person can start by telling the group something about himself, then reading the name on the paper he was left holding. Continue until everyone has been introduced.

Social Justice Stretching: "Reach down to get power from the grassroots (touch your toes)  
Reach up to the sky for inspiration (reach your arms up in the air)  
Stomp out injustice (stomp feet on the floor)  
Move in the winds of change (with arms out to your side twist your torso from left to right)"  
Repeat with a faster pace and repeat until you can't go any faster

Space Ship Catastrophe: Come up with a list of characters to be copied and given to each leader, and write each character on an index card to be distributed to team members. Divide the group into equal teams. Have a leader take each team into a different room and give them identical explanations. The scenario: They are in a space shuttle circling the Earth, and have just witnessed its destruction in World War III. There is no human life, and very little plant and animal life left on Earth. Their ship is rapidly running out of supplies and oxygen. They have one emergency craft that can return to Earth by using the remainder of their energy, but it only seats one fourth of the people now on board. They will each be given an identity of someone on board, and they must defend their right to live, and come to consensus as a group about who will get a place on the rescue craft. Pass out the index cards. Each character should have

advantages and disadvantages. For example, “A” might be a young fertile man, but he has a history of heart disease, or “B” might be post-menopausal, but she has a doctorate in world literature. Have the leaders leave them the master list and shut them in the room, instructing them not to emerge until they have decided and agreed.

**Spot:** Sit in a circle. Everyone is renamed Harry. One person turns to the person next to them and starts the dialogue, which is as follows:

#1: “Hello Harry,”

#2: “Yes Harry,”

#1: (referring to #3) “Tell Harry,”

#2: “Thank you, Harry.”

Then 2 becomes 1 and 3 becomes 2 and the dialogue starts over. When someone messes up the dialogue, they get a spot of toothpaste on their face and their name becomes “One Spot” instead of Harry. Once they reach five spots they become “Super Spot,” and after six spots they owe the rest of the players one dare. When the group is finished playing the game they can dream up something silly and mildly humiliating for him to do. (Note: It’s important for the facilitator to be careful about setting boundaries for appropriate behavior in this activity.)

**Teapot:** Choose a person to leave of the room. The remaining group chooses a verb. When the person returns to the room, the group must replace that verb with “teapot,” or another chosen word, when they speak. The person tries to discover the meaning of “teapot” by asking members of the group questions like, “Do you teapot a lot?” or, “What does it feel like to teapot?” Whoever reveals the verb in her answer to the question gets to be the next person to leave the room.

**Tone Singing:** Have each person close their eyes release sound on a different tone. (“Om” or “Ooooooo”). Hold the tones as long as possible, taking staggered breaths so that the sound is constant. Listen as the voices come into harmony with each other. Good for energy breaks or meditations.

**Trust Carry:** Divide the group into groups of nine to 11. Have one member of each group lie on their back on the floor, while the rest of the group stands on all sides of the body. Have the standing members gently slide their hands under the body, being careful to support the head, torso, and pelvis. They can then lift the body over their heads, and carry them around the room or rock him gently. Tell the person being lifted to completely relax their body and take in the sensations of being carried. Then the group can slowly bring him down to the floor and take turns being lifted. Variation: Place an object on a table. Make a line with masking tape four feet from the table. Move the whole group to behind the line. Tell them they have a mission: to pick each person up in turn, move them to the object and have them touch the object with a body part (finger, nose, shoulder) while the group is in complete control of the task. They must pick up every person in the group, and no body part can be repeated.

**Trust Fall:** Divide the group into pairs. In each pair, have one person stand directly in front of their partner, with their back turned toward him. Tell the person in front to close their eyes

and fall backwards toward her partner. Their partner will catch them under the arms and take their weight gently to the floor, or lightly place the, back up to standing. Have the partners reverse roles. Variation: Break the group into groups of four to six people. Have them arrange themselves in circles with one member in the middle. Have everyone in the circle take a solid stance: one foot positioned in front of the other and hands out, ready to catch the falling body. The person in the middle can prepare to fall by closing their eyes, crossing hands over their chest and relaxing their body while remaining erect. The person in the middle can then ask the group whether they are ready to catch them, and fall in whichever direction gravity takes them. Have the groups pass their body between them and play with different speeds.

Trust Walk: Remember anyone can opt out if they don't feel comfortable. This, like other activities has the ability to trigger those who have experienced trauma. Make sure you explain the activity so people know what they are getting into. These exercises are adaptations of an essential idea-- the value of interdependence. The group tests the boundaries of their trust in one another by experimenting with dependency. The trust walk also challenges group members to expand their perception of the world to include information picked up by senses other than sight. These exercises work best, but a large indoor space will do. Ask group members to pair up. Explain the trust walk: One partner will shut their eyes or be blindfolded. The other will be their guide, and lead him by touch around the space. You can decide whether to allow speaking or not. The guide is responsible for the safety of their partner. Encourage them to explore unusual areas where the air might feel different. Have all pairs return after a specified time and switch roles. If you have any blind youth, you might leave space for them to share at the end of this exercise. Variation: Have the guides lead their partners to within a few inches of a wall, then tell their partners to open their eyes. Variation: Have the pairs stand back to back. Tell the guides to lead their partners around the space without breaking contact. Variation: Have the guides lead their partners from the middle of the room to an object somewhere on the periphery. They can take a round-about route to this object, so as not to betray its location to their partner. When they have chosen objects, have them place their partners' hands on the objects and encourage them to explore the texture, weight, smell, sounds of the objects. Then have everyone return to the center and open their eyes. Have the partners attempt to find their object with their eyes open. (Lifting/carrying/supporting participants is a serious activity, along with remembering that anyone can choose to not participate, you MUST make sure a group is ready for the activity so as to have no one dropped.)

Two Truths and a Lie: Have each person in the group come up with two facts and one falsehood about themselves. Go around the circle and have each person present the three statements as if they are all true. Then have each member of the group guess which of the three statements is false. Variation: Two Lies and a Truth.

Vegetable Off: Two opponents stand back to back. At the call of a leader they march three paces from each other and stop. The leader then calls out the name of a vegetable or fruit, and the two opponents spin around and impersonate their interpretation of that vegetable or fruit. This could mean forming their body to look like the food item, or making motions and sound effects that they think represent the personality of the food item. All in all, the point is to get

creative. The group decides which impersonation is the best, and the winner moves on to battle a new opponent.

What are you afraid of?: Ask the group to sit in a circle and light a chalice. Pose this question into the silence: "What are you afraid of?" and invite the group members to respond whenever they feel moved to speak. Variation: Break the group into pairs. Have one partner ask the other, "What are you afraid of?" The other answers and the first affirms the answer by saying "Thank you." Then the roles reverse.

Whert: The person who is "It" leaves the room. The remaining group chooses a leader and sits down in a circle. "It" returns and sits in the circle. The leader will decide on a repetitive motion for the entire group to make. When the leader changes motions, everyone must follow suit. "It" tries to guess who the leader is. The leader keeps changing her motions and the group keeps following, but the group must try to deceive the person guessing by watching anyone but the leader to find out the next motion. When the leader is found out, she must leave the room and the group chooses a new leader.

Wizard Fight: Ask the group to stand in a circle, and explain to them that they are the best wizards in the nation, gathered together for a magical duel. The only price of being such incredible wizards is that all of their spells must be cast with outrageous and ridiculous sound effects and motions. The first wizard steps forward from the circle, points to an opponent of their choice, and says "I challenge you!". Their opponent is much too honorable to be allowed to back down from a challenge, and must therefore prepare to duel. They step forward from the circle and say "I accept your challenge!". The two wizards then cast spells at each other until one of them breaks, which generally entails smiling or laughing (wizard duels are serious business). The losing wizard steps out of the circle and the winner challenges someone new. The last two wizards can choose to battle either the regular way, or with a Vegetable Off.

You da schmoopy poo: The group forms a circle around one person. This lovely person spins around and around with their eyes closed, then opens their eyes and stops and affirms whoever they are facing in the following manner: "You da schmoopy poo because....." Then da schmoopy poo goes in the center. If they end up facing someone already affirmed, they affirm the person to their right.

Zoom: Form a standing circle, then have everyone hold hands and squat down. As they slowly come up to standing, have them say "zzzzzzzzzzoooooooooooooooooom!" (or any other joyful noise or word) and end with a jump in the air.