

Team Building Activities:

Forming

In the forming stage, group members get to know one another - their strengths, challenges, and interests - and they test the boundaries and expectations of the task they are to perform. The members also begin to learn to rely upon one another, their leader(s), and the standards they're being held to. Starting off with a positive forming stage can ease some of the challenges of the storming stage, which comes next.

Implications for Youth:

It is normal for young people to feel apprehensive or even anxious in the forming stage. Uncertain about expectations or the workings of the group, they may have questions about appropriateness of behavior and may be quiet or rely heavily on polite communication. This is not typically a productive time for the group, rather a time for establishing clear expectations, building relationships, and empowering youth to lead.

Team Building Activities:

Forming Stage Team Builders:

1. Who's in the Bag?

Give each student a brown paper bag and tell them that for homework they should put five objects in the bag that represent them and make them unique. The next time the group meets, have students share their objects in small groups, explaining each object.

2. Common and Unique

Have the whole group stand in the circle. Explain that you will read a statement and if it applies to you, take one step into the circle. For example, if you are an only child, step into the circle. Allow 3 seconds and tell students to look and take note of who is in the circle with them. Have students take turns making statements (but remind them that statements should be respectful). *Note: In the Forming Stage, this activity helps the youth get to know each other, learn what they have in common and what is special about them. In later group development stages, it can also be used to challenge assumptions, find common ground or help them understand one another better.*

3. Who am I?

Write the names of people or characters on individual pieces of paper. The names may be of real or fictional characters, living or dead. Keep the names secret before the activity. Tape one paper on the back of each participant. Either in pairs or allowing participants to mingle freely, encourage them to ask each other questions to try to figure out "Who am I?" Youth can only ask yes or no questions such as "Am I a real person?"; "Am I a man or a woman?"; or "Am I on television?".

Storming

This stage is characterized by group conflict - sometimes subtle, other times more overt - in the group. As members begin to feel more comfortable, opinions are voiced more strongly and some members may attempt to assert leadership in the group. This is sometimes thought of as a "testing and proving" phase, which eventually - for the group to be successful - leads to a problem-solving phase. Listening is a key skill to help this shift take place.

Implications for Youth:

Young people may show differing opinions and there may be more disagreement than there appeared to be in the forming stage. Some young people may naturally assert leadership, while others may become completely silent. Be prepared to allow young people to take the lead, remaining alert to where they may need support. Keeping everyone engaged, practicing listening skills, making sure everyone feels heard, and encouraging dialogue can help young people navigating these challenges. Maintain a focus on young people's strengths as the storming stage may be a way to strengthen and channel them toward respect for one another and collective problem solving.

Storming Stage Team Builders:

4. Interview Each Other:

In the storming stage as it coincides with the early phases of youth participatory action research planning, practice interviews can help young people feel comfortable and confident in the interview process as well as get to know their peers better. Encourage them to develop five deep (digging beneath the surface) questions - as a group or individually - and then conduct brief interviews of each other. They can practice public speaking by doing short presentations about their findings to the rest of the group, if time allows.

5. Hula hoop

Have the group form a circle and join hands, with two participants linking hands through the hula hoop. Pass the hoop around the circle. People will have to pass the hoop over their heads and then step out of the hoop to pass it on to the next person. This is hard to do on your own and is easier to do when the people on either side help to pass it on. The hoop has to get completely around the circle without anyone breaking the circle by letting go of each other's hands. As time allows, encourage the participants to try to complete the challenge more quickly. How fast can the team safely complete the task?

6. Youth Participation Ladder Opinion Line

Materials:

- Printed copy of the [Youth Participation Ladder](#)⁵:
- Rope
- Signs for each level of participation in the ladder

Activity:

Explain that the bottom three rungs represent 3 kinds of youth non-participation and all of the upper rungs are different kinds of participation. Explain the levels and give examples if needed. Ask the youth to stand next to the participation level that they believe best answers the following questions and encourage them to explain why they stood where they did:

- At what level are you used to operating with adults in your everyday life?
- At what level do you feel most comfortable in day-to-day life?
- What is the highest level of engagement you've ever participated? What was the setting you were in?
- At what level do you feel this youth participatory action research project involves youth?
- At what level would you like this youth participatory action research project to involve youth?

5: Youth Participation Ladder

http://www.openp2pdesign.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/ladder_youth.gif

7. Which Way is Wright?

Materials:

- 1-2 small objects (a ball or stuffed animal works great)

- A copy of the Wright Family Vacation story

Activity:

Have the youth stand in a circle with only one to two feet distance between them.

Tell them you'll be reading a story where every time they hear the word right (any spelling), they should pass the object(s) to the right. When they hear the word left, they should pass the objects to the left. Read the story below, starting out slow and increasing to a normal (or even fast) speed as you go.

The Wright Family Vacation

Before the Wrights—Mr. and Mrs. Wright and their two children, Cindy and Jeff Wright—left for vacation, they discussed some potential destinations. So no one would be left out or left wanting for a better vacation, they came up with the perfect idea.

Because all the Wrights are left-handed, it made sense that this summer, they would take a trip to London, where the world's largest left-handed store, called Anything Left-Handed, is located. All the Wrights plan to buy one special left-handed item while at the store. Mrs. Wright is getting a can opener, while Mr. Wright is looking for a special left-handed pen to prevent smudges when he writes. Cindy Wright wants a left-handed scissors, and Jeff Wright can't wait to drink coffee out of a left-handed mug.

To the Wrights' surprise, they discovered that Left-Hander's Day is August 13, which is the day they arrive in London. The idea behind Left-Hander's Day is for everyone to celebrate in fun, practical ways, making right-handed family members, friends, and colleagues realize how "dexterous" lefties have to be because they are constantly adapting a right-handed world to work for lefthanders. Getting "right-handers" to do everything left-handed for the day is a great way to make the point! After all, the Wrights and other lefties feel they have every right to be left-handed.

Adaptation: Wrap up a small gift that can be shared and use it as the object to pass.

Allow the youth who ends up with the gift to unwrap it and share it with the rest of the group.

Norming

As the name suggests, in this stage of development, the group has started to feel "normal" together. They have grown more comfortable communicating with one

another. Cliques tend to dissolve and leadership is shared as a level of trust is reached among members. They have begun to get a sense of their purpose, and some learning or growth is taking place.

Implications for Youth:

In this “middle” stage, comfort and trust can sometimes lead to complacency, a loss of focus. While they don’t want to return to the conflict of the storming stage, they also need encouragement to continue to move forward. This is a more productive time than either of the earlier two stages, but they are still not performing as well as they could be as a group. Praise and encouragement of positive behaviors as well as correction of behaviors that hold the group back go a long way toward moving the group into the performing stage.

Norming Stage Team Builders:

9. Human knot

If your group is very large you can divide into two groups. There should be at least six and not more than 10 people in a group. Have the group stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, facing the center. Ask participants to extend their hands in front of them and to first hold right hands and then left hands with other people in the circle. Everyone must grab the hands of two different people and they cannot grab the hands of the person who is standing next to them. The object of the game is to get untangled and to end up in a full circle again, without ever breaking the circle by letting go of each other’s hands. It is best to let the group negotiate this activity themselves, without guidance from any outsiders. People’s personalities come out in this activity; some people will naturally show leadership and direct others. This is a great team-building activity because all members of the circle are integral to the final outcome.

10. What Makes a Good Listener?⁶

Divide the group in half; group A and B. One group (A) should stay in the room and one (B) should leave. Each group will receive instructions each time the activity takes place (3 times). Instructions must be given separately to each group and can be given orally and/or in written format.

1st Experience:

Group A: Sit on the floor and tell the individual who comes up to you a story about something important to you. (a trip you took, a memory of childhood, a time you were successful or not successful)

Group B: Enter the room and find a partner. Stand in front of this person and listen to them.

2nd Experience:

Group A: Stand in one spot and as your partner tells a story, tell your story, interrupting, with better details, more impressive information, etc.

Group B: Enter the room and find your partner. Stand in front of this person and tell a story about something you are proud of. (an accomplishment, problem solved, etc.)

3rd Experience:

Group A: Stand in one place and be distracted while your partner tells you a story. (look around/behind to the side of your partner, talk about something you have to do, exhibit impatience)

Group B: Enter the room and find your partner. Stand in front of this person and talk about an important task that must be accomplished.

6: YELL - p. 47, <https://counties.uwex.edu/buffalo/files/2010/08/YELL-Leadership-Curriculum1.pdf>

1. A Round of Compliments

Tape a piece of paper to each youth participant's back. Provide the youth with pencils and encourage them to mingle about the room, writing compliments. Explain that the best compliments are brief, specific, and go beneath the surface (deeper than appearance). However, if they don't know the person well, compliments on appearance are also acceptable. Encourage them to keep going until they have put a compliment on the back of every person in the group. Then, give the youth time to read the compliments other students have given them.

Adaptation: Post sheets of paper around the walls of the room with each youth participant's name on them. Have the students rotate after 20-30 seconds with each sheet until they have gone all the way around the room.

1. Deserted Island

Give the youth five minutes to think as a team about a difficult situation.

Situation: The group will be stuck on a deserted island together for one full month. You can only take five things with you besides the clothes on your back and enough food for one week. What five things would you take?

After the first five minutes are over, ask them what they would bring and why.

Reflection Questions:

- What was easy about this task? What was difficult?
- How did you make decisions as a group?
- If you had more time, do you think you would have made different decisions? Why or why not?
- What role(s) did different members of the group take on? (leader, follower, questioner, notetaker, etc.)

Performing

The performing stage is the “sweet spot” of group development. Group members are more focused on tasks rather than personal issues. They can work effectively together and on their own. Leadership and other roles are defined and operating together smoothly. The group is energized about their work and take pride in it. Not every group reaches this stage.

Implications for Youth:

A performing group of young people requires somewhat less supervision depending on the level of the group; the adult partner’s role turns to answering questions, offering ideas, and providing guidance. It doesn’t take any less attention though. This is the time to continue developing and practicing needed skills, which keeps them motivated, valued and moving forward.

Performing Stage Team Builders:

1. Solo-Storming

Write a question on a whiteboard or sheet of flip chart paper. Provide small pieces of paper or post it notes and pencils for the youth, and ask them to individually solo-storm (brainstorming individually) as many possible responses to the question as they can, including serious, silly, or impossible responses and writing one idea on each piece of paper. Here are some possible questions:

- What arguments would you use to convince your school principal it's a good idea to get a giraffe (or have the youth choose a different animal) as a school pet?
- What could/would you do that is good for the world if you were invisible?
- If everyone around you in your day-to-day life was a spy, how would you determine who you could trust?
- You suddenly have the power to assign superpowers to anyone else. What superpowers would you assign to your family members and friends and why?

After 3-5 minutes of solo-storming, ask each youth to submit their funniest answer to one pile and their best (most creative and possibly effective) solution to a second pile. Share the answers/solutions from each pile.

1. The Distance Between Two People

In pairs, have participants stand a few feet apart facing one another. Ask them to talk to one another about themselves. When they find something they have in common, they should take a step toward each other. When they find a difference between them, they should take a step away from one another. After a few minutes, ask these reflection questions:

- What did you notice about your differences? your similarities?
- How far or close did you get to one another before you changed what you were looking for? How did you make that decision?
- Why might it be important in a group to have a balance between similarities and differences?

1. Team Count

Have the team sit in a circle facing away from each other. They may close their eyes if they wish. Tell them they are going to work together to count to 20. Only one person may speak at a time. If two say a number at the same time, the whole group has to start again with one. After several attempts, ask the following reflection questions:

- What did you notice about how the group worked (or didn't work) together to get to 20?
- What was difficult? What made it seem easy?
- How did your body feel when you thought about saying a number? What kind of thoughts or emotions did you have while the group was counting?
- What roles did you notice individuals taking on in the group?

Adaptation: If there's time, have them turn their chairs around and face each other. Encourage them to try counting to 20 again. The same rules apply, plus they must not use nonverbal cues to signal each other. What changes, if any, do they notice when they are facing one another?

1. Five by Five

Ask each youth to write down five things on a note card that they like. Ask them to each write down five things they do not like on a separate note card. Collect the cards and in no particular order, read each card, inviting the youth to guess who the card came from. The game continues to help the group get to know one another better while also building greater understanding.

Adjourning

Unless something else changes the course of a performing group, they complete their task, leading them to the final phase, adjourning. This is sometimes called the "mourning" stage, but it doesn't have to be sad. It can be a time of tying up loose ends, reflection, and evaluation for the group. Even if the group itself isn't disbanding, perhaps they're finishing a particular project they've been working on, and some closure can help them end the project with a sense of well-being and accomplishment.

Implications for Youth:

This is your opportunity to evaluate the youth's experience as well as encouraging them to evaluate their own project and learn from the results. Youth gain insight as they reflect on their role in the project, what they enjoyed about it, and what they might have done to further develop their role. During the other stages, the group has become largely interdependent. However, in this adjourning stage, youth completing closing tasks independently can help reinforce the lessons they learned as individual and the sense of personal achievement (rather than only as a member of a team).

Adjourning Stage Team Builders :

1. Mirror Mirror

Ask the youth to take a few minutes and choose at least three of the questions listed below to reflect on their own experiences, learning, and growth during the project.

Let them know you would appreciate reading their reflections, but they don't have to share them with you.

- What did I try that I had never done before?
- What challenge was I afraid or nervous about at the beginning that I overcame?
- What am I most proud of in my own work?
- What new friends or connections did I make that are important to me?
- What skills did I develop?
- What surprised me about the part I played in the project?
- What did I enjoy most about being part of this group? What did I like least?
- How can I use what I learned here in the future?

When they have responded to at least three questions, give them an envelope. Ask them to write their name and address on the envelope. Tell them you will send them their reflections in one month as a reminder of their experience and what they gained from it. *Adaptation: If you choose to, you could also write a note reflecting on your observations of each young person's growth to add to their envelope. They'll appreciate the feedback.*

1. Celebrate Good Times

Invite the youth participants to help plan a small celebration for the group. Encourage them to think back on the things they have learned about other members of the team during the project. Then, ask them to write down three things that would make the celebration special to other members of the group. Give them time to share what they wrote down and why. Before making decisions about how to celebrate, reflect on the suggestions:

- Where were there similarities in the suggestions that were made? Where were there differences?
- How did it feel to write down ideas that would make the celebration special for someone else instead of for yourself?
- If someone wrote down a suggestion that would make it special for you, how did that feel?
- How do you want to celebrate as a group?

1. Top Ten List

Tell the group that they are going to develop a Top Ten list of the lessons they have learned during the project. They might think of it as lessons they want to share with the next group to take on a youth participatory action project. The lessons

might be things they learned about themselves either individually or as a group, or they might be lessons learned about the process of working with the community on a project. Encourage them to [solo-storm](#) ideas for a few minutes, then come together to share their ideas and narrow the list to ten. *Adaptation: If there's time, encourage them to create a poster for their Top Ten list.*

1. An Attitude of Gratitude

No matter how great a team might be, they still had help along the way. Suggest that to develop an attitude of gratitude is a great way to show appreciation for others, acknowledge help they have received, and reflect on positive connections they've made along the way. As a group, develop a list of people or groups to thank. Explain that true gratitude is not only about saying thank you. It is about being specific about 1) what help or resources they received and 2) how it helped them achieve their goals. Either provide them with pre-made thank you cards or materials to make their own.

Additional Team Building Resources

- *The Big Book of Conflict Resolution Games* - <http://extension.wsu.edu/wallawalla/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2016/08/The-big-book-of-Conflict-Resolution-Games.pdf>
- Mikva Challenge - <https://www.mikvachallenge.org/programs/community-problem-solving/>
- Bruce W. Tuckman - <http://infed.org/mobi/bruce-w-tuckman-forming-storming-norming-and-performing-in-groups/>
- *Youth Participatory Action Research Curriculum* from the Institute for Community Research - <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/YOUTH/Documents/CurriculumYPAR2014.pdf>
- Youth Workin' It - <http://youthworkinit.com/tag/tuckmans-group-development/>