

# Leadership Ice-Breakers

**Ice Breaker 1:** The Leader as a Shepard (p.205) – From *Inspired Jewish Leadership* by Dr. Erica Brown

- a. Psalm 23, perhaps the most famous psalm, tells us “The LORD is my Shepherd.” God creates the primary model of leadership. Name as many biblical shepherds as you can.
- b. Although we have already mentioned a few, think of reasons that biblical leadership is so strongly associated with shepherding.
- c. King Saul was also a shepherd, but unlike his successor, he shepherded donkeys. What is the leadership metaphor in the change of animal?

**Ice Breaker 2:** Our Jewish Journey (p.207-208) - From *Inspired Jewish Leadership* by Dr. Erica Brown

- a. On a separate sheet of paper, draw a timeline. Mark this timeline with important dates and/or moments or events that chart your Jewish journey. Circle the events that were central or transformational.
- b. Use this exercise as a trigger to write a paragraph that explains how Judaism influences your life today.

*My Jewish journey began...*

**Ice Breaker 3:**

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Connect participants to one another
2. Reduce participant anxiety and create an appropriate tone and mood for learning
3. Elicit information pertinent to the session content

**PURPOSE:** Keep the Ice Breaker SHORT and do not allow participants to make speeches.

**TIME NEEDED:** 5 Minutes

**TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

Individuals attend meetings for a variety of reasons. They come with different expectations. Perhaps they are anxious because the setting is new and they don't know what to expect. Perhaps they don't know the other people who will be there. A skilled facilitator understands these anxieties and awkwardness and uses an "ice breaker" to make people feel comfortable and create a participatory environment.

Ice breakers can be designed for groups of any size. The choice of activity depends on the type of group and the goals of the meeting. For a group of strangers, introductions are appropriate and natural. When participants know each other, introductions are unnecessary. Interestingly, people who *have* "known" each other for year may, in fact, know *very* little about one another personally or Jewishly. Activities for this group can be designed to elicit opinions, personal history or experiences. ·

The ice breaker is a tone settler, not the major focus or agenda of the meeting. The trainer must be skilled enough to limit each person's participation, summarize the entire activity and *move* on the next order of business.

You must be explicit about time limits in the initial instructions and *give* participants a general outline of the meeting's agenda.

### **COMPONENTS OF THE ICE BREAKER:**

Clear, precise and non-threatening instructions are vital to the *success* of any group activity. The facilitator presents a time frame and assigns goals as necessary.

To accomplish the goal of full participation, the activity should provide an opportunity for each person to speak. Many people are accustomed to attending meetings where they never speak. A good ice breaker moves people from passive skepticism to active participation. Once the "ice is broken", the typical non-participant finds it easier to *assume* a more active role.

The icebreaker that you choose will depend somewhat on the nature of the group and exactly which program you are going to facilitate.

#### **Ice Breaker 4:**

Ask one of the following questions and have participants go around the room and answer. Write the responses on a flip chart:

- What is the most difficult challenge in a solicitation?
- What do you find easiest about soliciting?
- What is the *most* significant Jewish event in your life?
- From what country did your ancestors come?

#### **Ice Breaker 5: Life Mapping**

With a crayon, each person creates a timeline and picture of the events that led them to their involvement in the Jewish Community or different Jewish experiences that have had an impact on them and are perhaps part of the reason that they are here today. Participants should think about their life journey, and which life points helped define who they are today.

### **Ice-Breaker 6: Intro Interrupt**

**TIME NEEDED:** 10 minutes

**PURPOSE:** To help participants get to know one another and to encourage listening.

**GROUP SIZE:** 10 or more

**MATERIALS:** None

#### **TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

Room set up: Chairs in a circle or around round tables.

- Have one person stand up, introduce her/himself and start to speak about her/himself.
- As soon as she/he says something another person has in common (ie home town, college, age, etc) that person jumps up, says his/her name and starts talking about him/herself. The first person then sits down.
- This continues until everyone has had a turn to talk about themselves.

### **Ice-Breaker 7: Concentric Circles**

**TIME NEEDED:** 10 Minutes (averages 15 seconds per person. Total time based on a group of 40 people is 10 minutes)

**GROUP SIZE:** Unlimited, should be grouped in circles of 20 participants

**MATERIALS:** None

#### **TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

Have participants form two circles, one inside the other, standing to that those on the inner circle are paired off face-to-face with those on the outer circle.

- Each participant on the inside circle has 15 seconds to give the person facing them the answers to the following questions you ask:

For example:

- What is your name?
- Who is your favorite Jewish hero and why?
- What was the most successful Jewish Federation event you attended?
- Call time after 15 seconds
- Repeat questions (or change them) with the outer circle now responding to their opposites on the inside circle.
- Call time in 15 seconds.
- Ask everyone to move three persons to their right and begin again- outer, inner.

### **Ice-Breaker 8: What's In an Name?**

**TIME NEEDED:** 5 Minutes

**GROUP SIZE:** 30 or less

**MATERIALS:** Flip chart and markers

#### **TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

- Ask the participants, one at a time, to state their name.
- Then have participant add any nickname they've had in their lives, explaining the nickname's origin as they write.
- The activity can also be done with their Hebrew names, discussing the name's meaning or who they were named for.

### **Ice-Breaker 9: Talking Jewish**

**TIME NEEDED:** 5 Minutes

**PURPOSE:** Auditory observation skills are needed to understand what we do.

**GROUP SIZE:** Unlimited

**MATERIALS:** None

#### **TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

- Divide participants into two groups
- Have them stand in two parallel lines, facing each other.
- Designate one line to be the "speakers"
- Tell the speakers that they have one minute in which to tell the "listener" -the person across from them- "why they do what they do". In other words, why are they giving their time? Why are they here?
- Call time after one minute, and ask the "listeners" to repeat back to the original speaker what that person said.
- Conclusion: The listeners were busy mentally preparing what they would say when was their turn so it was difficult for them to remember what they heard.

### **Ice-Breaker 10: Making Life Meaningful:**

**TIME NEEDED:** 15 Minutes

**PURPOSE:** To help participants understand where they come from, where they would like to see their future and where they presently are.

**GROUP SIZE:** Unlimited, if working in pairs. If you want to mobilize people, this activity works best with less than 50.

**MATERIALS:** A large sign in each of the four corners of the room stating:

1. Practice Jewish traditions
2. Help your fellow Jews
3. Believe in G-d
4. Help your fellow man

#### **TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

- If you want the participants to interact and move around, ask them to go to the corner of the room with the sign that would be most important to their parents and discuss why within that group.
- Next, ask each participant to consider which value would be most important to their children. If they have more than one child, they should think "average". Participants then move to the appropriate room corner.
- The third phase of this exercise is about themselves. Ask each participant to go to the corner of the room that demonstrates where they are right now.
- Conclusion: It is difficult to choose among these values. Yet, in attempting to understand why we do what we do, it is important to take the time to clarify our values and realize that involvement with Federation covers all those values.

### **Ice-Breaker 11: Making Life Meaningful:**

**TIME NEEDED:** 15 Minutes

**PURPOSE:** To quickly and graphically demonstrate the limitations of closed ended questions.

**GROUP SIZE:** Unlimited

**MATERIALS:** A list of characters (preferably from Jewish history) prepared in advance by the trainer; Name-tags or Post-It notes.

**TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

- Develop a list of characters based on well-known figures as diverse as Ben-Gurion and Moses' sister, Miriam.
- Write one name per name tag or Post-it note, enough for the group.
- Place a tag on each participant's back, and allow participants 5-7 minutes to find out from the others what their new identity is.

The ground rules are:

- They can only ask questions that require a "yes" or "no" answer.
- They must ask at least five different people a different question
- Once time is up, reconvene the group. Discover and praise/prize those who guessed correctly despite the restrictions of their closed-ended questions.
- Explain how important open-ended questions are to understanding our donors and "where they are coming from". If the exercise had allowed more than a "yes" or "no" response, they could have simply asked the open-ended question "Tell me about myself," they would have known their new identities from the detailed response they received.
- If time permits, change people's identities and do a second round of the activity using open ended questions and note how much faster it is for them to guess their new identities.

**Ice-Breaker 12:** Silent Birthdays

**TIME NEEDED:** 5-10 Minutes

**GROUP SIZE:** Unlimited, in teams of 10

**MATERIALS:** None

**TRAINER GUIDELINES:**

- Ask the teams to line up in ascending order by their birthday (month/day only) January first. Tell them they have X number of minutes.  
The catch? They cannot speak to each other.
- Monitor the frustration level as time runs out and jump in with a tip or two if need be
- Typically, a leader will emerge and realize that the group can communicate via sign language or with other tools lying about the room, such as pen and paper.
- When time is up, have team call out its lineup by birth date.
- The exercise is a quick way to highlight topics to be covered in the training session, such as:
  1. The need to find new ways of communicating your message when working in a team environment.
  2. How leadership issues emerge.