

Chapter 11

Five-Minute Springboard Exercises

With the minor investment of time required by these exercises, you can give the group a meaningful experience that helps to illuminate the work of the day and increase the group's ability to meet its goals. Some exercises, such as HANDS TOGETHER, WAIT A MINUTE, or MINI-MED, are about quiet, focus, and concentration, while others involve movement and physical contact and help to give the group energy. What they have in common is that each can be done in five minutes or less (with some additional time for processing) and in that time can provide a significant boost to the group's understanding of its work and a corresponding increase in productivity.

In addition to the exercises in this chapter, the following exercises can be done in five minutes or less:

CHILL, CHILL, RUN	p. 262
EVERYBODY'S IT	p. 265
FINDING THE FS	p. 218
GROUP COUNT and variations	p. 221
GROUP MOAN/GROUP SHOUT	p. 286
LINE CHASE	p. 268
HIDE AND SEEK: TIME LIMITED (variation)	p. 330
PAIR TAG	p. 270
RIVER WILD RACE (variation)	p. 208
ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT	p. 239
STAND UP/SIT DOWN and variations	p. 296
TIMED ART	p. 250
TRIANGLE TAG	p. 278

Also, most of the exercises in chapter 14 (Tag-Style Exercises) generally take 5-10 minutes, but can be done in five minutes or less.

Exaggeration

Goals	Communication, Different perspectives, Acting
Time	Roughly 30 seconds per participant (not including processing)
Physical contact	None
Physical challenges	Must be able to mimic and exaggerate a movement from another participant.
Number of participants	5 or fewer
Space requirements	Open floor space is ideal, but the exercise can also be done around a table.
Materials needed	None
Preparation	None

Instructions

1. Have the group stand in a circle.
2. Ask for a volunteer to begin.
3. The first person makes a tiny movement.
4. The person to their right makes the same movement, but does it in a large, exaggerated way.
5. This person then makes a different tiny movement.
6. Proceed around the circle in this way. End with the first person exaggerating the movement of the person to their left.

Processing suggestions

- In times of stress, small things can get exaggerated.
- The same thing can be perceived very differently depending on how it is communicated.
- Sometimes people may exaggerate movements that the person did not intend to make. How do patterns sometimes get repeated unintentionally in the group and elsewhere?
- This exercise can be used to discuss issues of gossip and “he said/she said.”
- Watch the way people made their movements for aspects that might be valuable for processing. People have different styles that will be obvious.
- How does having a variety of styles both enhance the group and also present challenges?
- Some people will have difficulty with this exercise. Not everyone is comfortable with exaggeration or making “big” statements and those people will have a hard time doing this under pressure. How does this affect the group’s work?

Eye Connect

Goals	Introspection, Surfacing group dynamics, Interconnection
Time	5-10 minutes (not including processing)
Physical contact	None
Physical challenges	Must be able to see across the circle.
Number of participants	10-30
Space requirements	Open floor space
Materials needed	None
Preparation	None

Instructions

1. Have everyone stand in a circle and keep their heads down, looking at the floor.
2. When you give the signal, each person will look up and across the circle and try to meet the eyes of another person. People should not speak throughout the exercise.
3. When eye contact is made, both people move toward each other and take each other's place in the circle. They should not lose eye contact until they have arrived in the other person's place. Caution people to move slowly and carefully across the circle, since a number of pairs will be crossing at the same time and people will be moving backwards.
4. As soon as they arrive in the new place, people should try to make eye contact with someone else.
5. Continue until time is called.

Processing suggestions

- This exercise explores what it is like to make a connection with someone else, and it provides an image of people actively looking for ways to make connections with others. There are many levels of connection in our lives, from casual contact on the street to deep relationships.
- What were the dynamics of the group? Did you tend to connect only with certain people, such as people you know best? Did people avoid eye contact altogether? Why?
- Sometimes people have the experience of trying to make contact and not being able to, when others are doing it easily. If that happened to you, how did it feel?
- Eye contact can mean different things depending on the culture and the context. It can be a sign of respect, a challenge to authority, or a desire for intimacy. What did it feel like to maintain eye contact with someone for such a long period of time? What positive and negative associations do people have with making eye contact?
- It takes courage to connect using your eyes and your perception, and to connect with and affect the world around you.
- Because prolonged eye contact can be intense and cause anxiety for some people, laughter may emerge in this exercise. You can discuss the use of humor as a way of diffusing anxiety.
- You can talk about what how difficult it can be to maintain a connection with someone. Could people keep connections and still move without bumping into each other? How did it feel to be in the middle of the circle? How do you maintain connections with people you've met?



- The exercise can illustrate how, even as you focus on maintaining one relationship, you also need to be aware of the social context surrounding that connection.

Variation – One-Eyed Eye Connect

Instructions

1. Follow the instructions for EYE CONNECT except that everyone keeps one eye closed throughout their connection (or covers one eye with a hand). Caution people to move even more slowly and carefully, since they will be lacking peripheral vision on one side.
2. When people arrive in their new places in the circle, they switch which eye is closed, then try to make eye contact with someone else.

Additional processing suggestions

- This exercise can illustrate what it is like to move through the world or through a project with limited vision or perspective. It is important to see the whole picture as much as possible when working on a project, because having a partially blocked view will affect the outcome of the work.
- When we lose our perspective, it can greatly affect how we react to situations. Problems can seem bigger or smaller than they actually are, and that can affect our strategies to address them. How did having one eye closed affect people's perception of depth? Did things seem closer or farther away than they actually were? How did this affect people's strategies and actions?
- You can also use this exercise to talk about responding and adapting to challenges.

Variation – Spinning Eye Connect

Instructions

1. Follow the instructions for EYE CONNECT except that as people move across the circle while maintaining eye contact, each person must spin around once.
2. People should reestablish eye contact as soon as possible after the spin.

Additional processing suggestions

- This exercise can be used to see what happens when connections are broken and how people find ways to reconnect with one another.
- Did people have strategies for trying to maintain eye contact?
- How difficult was it to reconnect?
- What kinds of situations allow members of this group to connect or disconnect?
- How about people in general? How hard is it to reconnect once you have lost connection? What prevents people from trying to reconnect?

Variation – Eye Connect with Everyone

Instructions

1. Proceed as usual with EYE CONNECT, except that each person's goal is to connect with every other person in the group. Note that it's OK for two people to connect more than once.

Additional processing suggestions

- What were people's feelings when they succeeded or did not succeed in connecting with everyone?
- What are the risks in this variation of the exercise?
- You can use this exercise to talk about the need to connect with everyone at an event that the group is planning. Did people have strategies they used to connect with everyone in the group? What strategies can be used to make sure we connect with everyone at the event? How do we pull in people who are harder to connect with?
- How did it feel to connect with someone more than once?

Variation – Long Distance Eye Connect

Note: This exercise can provide relevant images for a group that has been in close connection, that has done EYE CONNECT previously, and that is now about to disperse, spread out, or lose some members.

Instructions

1. Have the group stand in a circle, then step backwards to widen the circle as far as seems practical.
2. Have everyone turn around with their backs to the circle. Instruct people to position themselves so that they cannot see anyone else, or to close their eyes if they can see other people.
3. At the count of three, everyone turns around with eyes open and looks around the room. The exercise continues as for EYE CONNECT, except that the circle is much wider.
4. You can speed up the exercise if you wish by telling people to connect within a specified time, such as five seconds. Caution people to be careful.

Additional processing suggestions

- Processing can focus on the power of consciously staying in connection even at a distance.
- What are the difficulties and the opportunities when you have to find new ways of relating and of making connections with others in the wider world?

Follow Me, Follow You

Goals	Group introspection, Surfacing group dynamics
Time	5 minutes (not including processing)
Physical contact	None
Physical challenges	Minimal
Number of participants	12-20
Space requirements	Open floor space
Materials needed	None
Preparation	None

Instructions

1. Have everyone stand in a circle.
2. Ask each person to look around the circle and choose someone as their leader, but to keep their choice a secret.
3. Then ask everyone to think of a pose.
4. On the count of three, each person first strikes their pose, then looks at their leader and does whatever their leader is doing for the rest of the exercise.
5. End the exercise when the entire group is doing the same movement or is in the same pose. If this does not happen, end the exercise when group members stop switching poses.
6. The exercise will take only a few seconds to play out. You can have the group do it several times if you wish.

Processing suggestions

- Analyze leadership patterns in the group by looking at who chose whom to be their leader, and whom everyone was following in the end.
- How did people decide whom to choose as a leader? How did people's strategies relate to how they choose leaders in life, be they role models, mentors, or politicians?
- Did anyone change their mind at the last second and decide to follow someone else? Why?
- Other points for discussion include the idea that leadership lies within the group, and that individual actions on a daily basis serve as a model for everyone else in the group. What are our responsibilities if we are all leaders for each other?

Go Between, In Between

Goal	Group problem solving
Time	5 minutes (not including processing)
Physical contact	Minimal
Physical challenges	Minimal
Number of participants	15-30
Space requirements	Open floor space
Materials needed	None
Preparation	None

Note: It is difficult to make this exercise “succeed” in a traditional sense, especially with a large group, but processing the exercise provides people with interesting insights. Since each person is intent on their own goal, which is enmeshed in the conflicting goals of others, what develops is usually either perpetual motion or resignation. It rarely occurs to a group to stop and work together.

Instructions

1. Have the group stand in a circle.
2. Each person should select in their mind two other people in the room. They should not say the names of those people or indicate in any way who they are. The people selected do not have to be standing near each other.
3. When you say “Go,” each person moves to try to stand between the two people selected. The exercise ends when everyone is satisfied with their position or when chaos ensues.

Processing suggestions

- The decisions we make affect others in ways we may not initially be aware of, and our ability to carry out our own decisions is often dependent on the decisions of other people. It is important to communicate what decisions are being made, and why they are being made.
- When our own goals are frustrated by others in a group setting, how do we react? Do we continue to pursue our own interests? Do we give up? Do we stand back, look at the larger picture, and try to make some order out of the chaos?
- What can we learn from this exercise about the complexity of consensus and about group versus individual decision-making?



Group Beat

Goals	Interconnection, Surfacing group dynamics, Creativity, Different perspectives
Time	5 minutes for a group of 8-20 (not including processing); see note
Physical contact	None
Physical challenges	Minimal
Number of participants	8-20 per group; see note
Space requirements	Open floor space. Can also be done seated at tables.
Materials needed	None
Preparation	None

Note: This exercise can be adapted for a large group or for a situation such as a banquet in which people are seated around tables. Divide the group into small groups of 8-20 if it is not naturally divided. Then give the instructions, telling each small group to come up with its own beat, following the instructions below. Give them a minute or so to create the beat, then call on one group at a time to do its beat.

Instructions

1. Have the group stand in a circle.
2. Ask for a volunteer to begin. That person starts by making a rhythmical sound, and they continue to make that sound until the end of the exercise.
3. Others join in whenever they wish with a sound of their own, such as a “beat-box” beat, a snap of the fingers, or a vocalization, until everyone in the group is contributing a sound to the “group rhythm.” Each new sound should be something that fits with the sounds that others are making. The goal is to get the whole group making their sounds at once and (hopefully) for it to sound coherent. It is helpful if someone in the group provides a basic beat that others can build on.
4. Let the beat continue for a moment or two before calling time.

Processing suggestions

- GROUP BEAT can be used to show the way that people’s different talents, abilities, and points of view contribute to the work of the group. Each person has an individual sound (talent, etc.) to contribute.
- Does the group make room in its work together for different kinds of sounds (or skills, talents, points of view), or is there pressure for everyone to sound the same?
- Combining many people’s sounds, the group has its own unique song or rhythm.
- Everyone has to work together and adjust to each other’s rhythms. It is a challenge to coordinate your own rhythm, timing, and style with what others in the group are doing.
- The exercise might illustrate the importance of good timing in the group’s work.
- Is there coordination among people’s varied roles within the group?
- Was there one central sound that held the group’s beat together? Is there a parallel with the group’s work?
- Did people have difficulty coming up with a sound to contribute?
- Were the sounds very similar or very different?