

*Connect RP would like to acknowledge the collective wisdom represented amidst this collection of work, from various skilled practitioners, educators and training courses (ranging from IIRP, CDI, and Belinda Hopkins), Michelle's own head-heart-and-hand, and mostly to the volunteer work that Michelle gets to do, working in prisons as part of the excellent AVP (Alternative to Violence Programme) where she learned many of the gems here and the transformative impact of their practice. We hope they serve you as much as they have us in our community/ circle / group work.

Shuffles (Mixing Groups /Beginning Circles)

These are intended to ignite energy into the room, to create a fun vibe, and to support the group to connect with and hopefully sit beside new people in our circles.



1. The Wind Blows...

It's essential that we co-create a relational, warm space, where we feel connected and safe to share. I recommend gatherings of 4-10 people for regular 30 min sessions. In my experience, tea / bread / biscuits can be a huge part of this community-building experience, so put the kettle on and perhaps offer the group a shared responsibility around this to make it sustainable (*even if this needs to be done virtually at this time). Remember this is about offering a relational experience for us all, not getting to the end of a topic or ticking a box! Timing can be important – it is only sustainably on our own free time of course – often people use a lunch time or pre-school breakfast gathering, for example we facilitated our session every Monday lunchtime for 3 years! Invite the community to consider a time that may work best but actually scheduling the gatherings will be key!!!

- Students sit in a circle.
- The person 'on' stands in the centre of the circle and says ...the wind blows for anyone who (add a description, for example has eyebrows/ likes dogs/ is wearing white socks).
- Anyone who meets the description swaps to a new seat (they cannot move to the one next to them).
- The aim is for the person 'on' to take one of the chairs and leave someone else 'on' in the middle of the circle.
- The person 'on' can shout 'hurricane' at any time which is a signal that everyone in the whole circle moves.

Play The Wind Blows... after a few moves, see if the group can adapt this game in a way to exaggerate respectful invitations (example: could those with beautiful blonde hair mind moving, if it wasn't too much bother, that would be marvellous, thank you ever so much!) and movements (oh, after you with an exaggerated hand gesture) when changing chairs.



Shuffles (Mixing Groups / Beginning Circles)



2. 'The Sun Shines (a variation of 'The Wind Blows')

- Students sit in a circle.
- The person 'on' stands in the centre of the circle and says ...'the sun shines on anyone who, like me, loves pizza (this is a way to see ourselves in one another /promote empathy)
- Anyone who meets the description swaps to a new seat (they cannot move to the one next to them).
- The aim is for the person 'on' to take one of the chairs and leave someone else 'on' in the middle of the circle.
- The person 'on' can shout 'sun shower' at any time which is a signal that everyone in the whole circle moves.



3. Fruit Salad (Variation of The Wind Blows/ The Sun Shines)

- Assign each student a fruit (apple / orange/ pear/ pineapple).
- The person who is 'on' stands in the middle and calls a type of fruit out.
- The people with the identified fruit swap seats while the person in the middle takes a chair leaving someone else 'on'.
- Fruit salad can be called to indicate that everyone in the circle moves.



4. The Clock in the Tower

- Assign each student a fruit (apple / orange/ pear/ pineapple).
- The person who is 'on' stands in the middle and calls a type of fruit out.
- The people with the identified fruit swap seats while the person in the middle takes a chair leaving someone else 'on'.
- Fruit salad can be called to indicate that everyone in the circle moves.

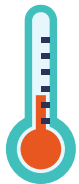


5. Play Secret Seat Swap

- Choose a volunteer to stand in the middle with a blindfold.
- Quietly offer students numbers from 1-5.
- Invite the person 'on' to call one number (scale up to calling out two or three numbers if they find it hard to catch someone!)
- Students with the called number swap seats while the blindfolded person tries to catch them.
- The person caught is 'on' (if they feel safe to be blindfolded. If not, seek a volunteer

***Temperature Check

(before or after a shuffle to get a read for the connection or knowledge of the group)
It can be great as a safe way to check in with groups. Perhaps when working with a mixed or new group and we are sure if they know each other or not.



Possible Questions:

- How comfortable are you sharing in this group?
- How well do you know each other?
- How much do you know about RP/emotional literacy/respect etc? (can be adapted for any subject matter in a classroom)
- Hold your hand low to show "not very comfortable"
- Hold your hand in the middle (waist height) to show "pretty comfortable" Hold your hand high (shoulder height) to show "very comfortable"



ENERGISERS

Energisers

These are a great way to bring a group back to life mid lesson / activity. To offer a transition to another activity or to create community within a group.

1. Palm Tree, Elephant, Charlie's Angels

- Invite everyone to stand in a circle. You stand in the middle and explain the following instructions

Elephant:

- Explain that when you point to someone and say "elephant", the task of that person will be to put hands and arms together and point them at the floor like a trunk of an elephant. (Illustrate this action)
- Then the two people either side of the 'elephant trunk' will face them to form the elephant ear with their arms in a shape of a C or a backwards C.

Palm Tree:

- Explain that when you point to someone and say "palm tree", that person will raise their arms above their head straight in the air to form the trunk of the tree.
- The two persons either side of the trunk, will wave their arms away from the trunk like the palm of a tree

Charlie's Angels:

- Explain that when you point to someone and say "Charlie's Angels", that person will pose with their arms forward making a gun with their hand.
- The person either side of them will turn to the side and lift up one leg and make a gun with their hands against the chest area.

Practise the three instructions with the group for a few turns to ensure they understand them. Then play the game by pointing at random people using one of the three above. If one of the three people do not make the correct action, they must take your place in the circle and begin the process again by trying to catch someone else out so that they take their place in the centre of the circle.

2. Earthquake

Explain that this involves 'houses' and 'tenants'. A house is made up of two people facing each other with arms held up into the air touching palms. A tenant is a person who goes into a house which means standing under the arch formed by the two house-people.

- Ask everyone to form trios of 3 (this activity works with any multiple of 3 plus one person. *You may need to adjust numbers accordingly).
- When the person 'on' calls
 - *"Tenant", all tenants must move to find a new house/arch to stand under
 - *"Houses", all houses, while staying together with hands touching, must move/shuffle to find a new tenant (tenants remain stationary)
 - *"Earthquake". All houses and tenants break up and everyone forms new trios (house and tenant)
- The person 'on' will be looking for a spot so if someone else does not have a spot and they become the leader and call one of the above to free up and take a spot.

Energisers



2. 1,2,3 (noise, gesture, dance move)

- Assign A,B pairs in the group.
- Ask a volunteer to be your partner.
- Invite them to stand opposite you and say you are both going to count to 3, taking it in turns to say a number.

Round One: (1,2,3)

- You say 1, they say 2, you say 3 , they say 1, you say 2, they say 3 and so on....
- Invite everyone to try.

Round Two: (noise, 2 ,3)

- You make a noise (example = woohooo) instead of saying 1, your volunteer says 2, you say 3 , they say the noise (instead of 1), you say 2, they say 3, you say the noise, etc.
- Invite everyone to try

Round Three (noise, action, 3)

- You keep the noise for the number one and now add a gesture (example = clap hands) in place of saying the number two
- Model noise, gesture, say the number '3'
- Invite everyone to try

Round Four (noise, gesture, dance move – for the brave ☺!)

- You add a dance move for 3 (example = twirl / shimmy)
- Model noise, gesture, dance move
- Invite everyone to try.

*This game can be edited with more low risk / easy to follow activities if needed (1. high five 2. slap thigh 3. clap etc.) The intention is to consolidate learning, energise the room and to laugh and have fun together by being playful.

4. Pattern Ball

- You will need 3-5 small, ideally soft balls / tennis balls
- Invite the group to stand in a circle
- Everyone should hold their hands up ready to catch a ball.
- Once they have received the ball once, they should cross their arms to indicate that they are no longer available for a catch.
- Everyone needs to remember who threw the ball to them and who they threw it to in order to create a pattern for the group.
- This is a silent game.
- Begin with one ball in this sequence and add a second, third, fourth and fifth ball as the pattern becomes more fluid.

5. Community 'Rock, Paper, Scissors' – Ro Sham Bo

- Use Ro Sham Bo in place of 1,2,3 and play the game as normal, making sure the gesture is made on the word 'Bo'
- Begin in pairs. The 'loser' becomes a cheerleader by placing their hands on the winners shoulders and walking with them to the next game (eventually forming trains) until we find the overall winner in the class, getting cheered by everyone

Extension 1:

- When only two chains/trains remain, both trains play one another as a group, using their whole body to play the game.
- The group stands with their backs to one another and as a community decides if it will play as a group rock (by all crouching on the ground as they turn around), paper (by all standing upright with the hands in the air as they turn around) or scissors (by jumping up and landing with arms and legs crossed like a scissors as they turn around)
- Facilitator shouts RO, Sham Bo (Go) and the groups simultaneously turn to face one another using the actions above of Rock/Paper or Scissors.
- Play the best of three to find the overall group winner.
- Split into two groups, and make lines facing one another

Extension 2:

- Final round, winners chase loser in a game of tag to close !



GAMES (FUN TEACHING TOOLS)

Games (Fun Teaching Tools)

1. Greetings around the World (Circles Intro)

- Introduce the Quiet hand signal

***Quiet Hand Signal



This is a silent signal that communicates the need for quiet. The Circle Keeper/Facilitator/Teacher raises their hand to begin the signal and when the students in the circle/class see this, they become quiet and also raise their hand to support others to see this communication cue. It is a visual indication that a new set of instructions need to be shared or a transition to a new activity needs to be facilitated. It is not a means to 'control' the group or the circle but an opportunity for the circle to work collaboratively and calmly. The games regularly involves shifts in energy and multiple transitions from quiet focussed reflections, to interactive paired activities, and lively group play times etc. This signal allows for the facilitation of such variety in a calm and effective manner, especially necessary in a specified timeframe needed on a busy class

- Form standing concentric circles:
 - * Ask half the group to stand in a circle in the middle of the room.
 - * When they are there, ask them to turn around to face outwards and form an inverted circle.
 - * Ask the rest of the group to stand in a circle outside the inner one and to face one person
- Explain that we will be practising world greetings, explain that this is for fun and not necessarily accurate.
- Say that in **Ireland**, we often greet each other by shaking hands and saying hello. Explain that we will be greeting everyone in the circle this way by moving around clockwise (inner circle stay still and outer circle move clockwise and greet everyone until they return to the start), making eye contact, shaking hands and saying hello.
- When people are back to the start, use your quiet hand signal to quieten the room and repeat the process with the other greetings as follows (For time purposes it can be helpful to now get people to greet five others and stop at the fifth person for the rest of the greetings):
 - USA** – In USA we give a very enthusiastic high five, saying 'alright' !!
 - Spain** – In Spain, we use air-kisses and say 'hola'
 - India** – In India, we sometimes say the light in me, sees the light in you by saying 'Namaste', Namaste and holding their hands in a prayer position
 - Hawaii** – In Hawaii we say 'Aloha', while doing a hula dance and tapping hips together
- Then say "People in Iceland sometimes greet each other using 'Eskimo kisses' which is touching noses..... The group will typically hesitate, laugh nervously and looks reluctant at this invitation. Then you explain you were only joking at this one and invite them to finish and take a seat.
- Debrief by explaining that this is a fun demonstration of how some people can be uncomfortable in situations that others find easy, for example, some people can find it easy to sit and share, it feels as easy as shaking someone's hand while for others, it is hard to sit in a circle and share, it feels as uncomfortable as if we are being asked to touch someone else's nose!
- Draw out learning about the importance of feeling safe for people to be in circles and trying to grow the capacity to feel comfortable by practising in a safe way with boundaries (voluntary participation, scaffolding, ability to pass, acknowledgment of any contribution). Use this as a way to create circle agreements agreed at the beginning.



Games (Fun Teaching Tools)

2. In the Long Grass (Introduce and practise values)



- Gather in a circle and have an empty chair placed to the left of the person who is 'on'.
- He \ She moves into the empty chair saying 'Here I sit' (initially start in a clockwise direction)
- The next person that has an empty chair to their left (who will be sitting beside the 'on' person) jumps into the empty chair saying 'in the long grass' ...
- The next person repeats this action by adding 'with my friend ... and adds a name (for example, Jack and then Jack moves to the spare chair and leaves an empty chair across the room).
- The person with the empty chair on their left now begins this process again by saying 'Here I sit'.. and so on.
- Once the game is established, switch the expectation by inviting the person either side of empty chair to compete for it instead of just going in a clockwise direction.

Once this gets a little messy / chaotic, remind students of our intention to practise respect and to consciously include the respect value into the game. See if students can come up with a respectful way to decide who takes the empty chair to begin the game and to respectfully honour the winner ☺! (for example, the first person to touch the chair wins and the other person congratulates them)

- Once people's name have been called they should cross their arms to indicate that they are no longer available for an invitation to move seats. Encourage people to try to be brave and choose people they do not know so well, maximising connection and minimising those who may be most vulnerable to isolation being left until last.

3. Human Knot/Pretzel (Team Building / Problem-Solving)



Human Knot team building activity - Everyone has responsibility to be part of the solution. Here we consider what needs to happen to make 'amends' and repair the circle?

Get the group to form a circle of 8 or 10 people (needs to be an even number)

1. Tell them to put their right hand up in the air, and then take the hand of someone across the circle from them (they can't take the hand of someone next to them).
2. Then repeat this with the left hand, ensuring they grab a different person's hand.
3. Check to make sure that everyone is holding the hands of two different people and they are not holding hands with someone either side of them.
4. Then they must now try to untangle themselves to form a circle without breaking the chain of hands.
5. Ask the group not to tug or pull on each other but to support and work with each other to be part of the solution.

(*the group can often untangle into a circle)

Discuss: What needed to happen to make 'amends' and repair the circle? - work together, positive communication, understand each other's position, step into each other's shoes, be solution-focussed etc.



Games (Fun Teaching Tools)

4. Trust activity (creating partnership and dynamic partnerships)

- Invite students to cross their arms and hold each other's wrists in pairs.
- Ask them to lean back and trust that they will support each other.
- See if they can squat to the ground and then trust each other to pull themselves up by leaning away from one another to offer mutual support (this can work equally well with students of different size/weight/height etc.).



5. Line up (silent / group communication & co-operation)

Explain that this activity requires everyone to cooperate in silence, and that they may use gestures.

**A nice practice activity can be to invite students to line up in order of height - good to get them used to working in silence and gesturing with each other before this follow-on co-operative task.

- The groups task is to arrange themselves in order according to the month and day of their birth.
- If there are no questions, invite the group to begin.
- When movement ends, ask if they are all comfortable with the arrangement. If so, ask them to state the month and day of their birth in order
- It's not an easy task in silence. Ask group for their experiences. Note that even sometimes when we speak, we don't fully understand what another is saying, but we will try as a class to work together and communicate in positive ways as much as possible,





CLOSING RITUALS FOR GROUPS

Some helpful relational ways to close a gathering, group activity or lesson.

1. A *'St. Mark's / Bishop Shannahan YES'

(change this to the name of your school or organisation) Affirmation (we are saying 'YES' to community, affirming to ourselves and one another – this one can be cheesy I know but lovely once we acknowledge the 'cheesy-ness' and give into the good vibes!!

- Ask students to stand in a circle.
- Invite them to hold hands (one giving and the other receiving to flow the energy in our circle).
- Instruct them to raise their arms high in the air while taking in a deep belly breath.
- Ask them to lower their arms and shout 'YES' in a very loud voice while swinging their arms down with a vibrant energy (which raises the earth's positive vibrations ☺!).
- Repeat this three times which usually creates laughter (even if we are smiling at ourselves !)

2. A*'Texas/Tallaght /Tralee Hug' (quick and fun close)

(change this to the geographical location of your school / organisation)

- Form a group in a circle close to each other and to hold hands.
- Facilitator/Circle Keeper gives instructions 'the way we do it is to take one step back' (all take a step back) "and two steps forward"
- This will squeeze the group and make them laugh

3. Echo Emotions (empathy)

- Invite the students to stand in a circle.
- Ask each person to say their name and do an action to show how they feel at this time (for example, someone named Michelle who is feeling good might say 'Michelle' while giving a smile and thumbs up to show she is feeling content.
- Or a variation is to ask each person to say their name and do an action to illustrate something / feeling/ emotion/ idea that they are taking away from the group or activity (for example, someone named Michelle who is taking away connection might say ' Michelle' while forming a heart shape with her hands.
- The whole circle honours this by echoing the person's name and the action back to them.

4. Frozen Statue / Freeze Frame

- Break students into groups of 4-5
 - Each group is invited to create a frozen statues or freeze frame to represent something they have learned as a group / something they are taking away from working as a group / or something that they would like to bring into and grow within the group.
 - Offer the group 2 mins to come up with their freeze frame.
 - Each group performs while the others guesses what they are illustrating.
- Encourage them to be as creative and cryptic as they wish (within a 2 min time barrier of course ☺!).



Closing Rituals for Groups

5. Gift Giving

- Go around the circle. Each one saying in turn to a classmate in the circle, "I give you the gift of.." giving an imaginary present that seems appropriate to that person
- This person then chooses another person to pass a gift on to.
- Encourage participants to not just choose their closest friends but to choose someone they may be only getting to know through the group work (*this also minimises chance that the least connected person to the group is left til last).
- People only receive one gift so everyone gets a turn

Or a variation is

- Instead of gift giving, use the sentence, "I recognise in you the gift of " (making people laugh / kindness/ helping others/ having fun / being brilliant at Maths etc.)

6. Sparkle Someone Today!

- Go around the circle in a clockwise direction sparkling your neighbour (a sparkle is something that is kind, honest and affirming about the other person).
- This can be repeated in the other direction if there is time.
- Before beginning, explain that there is no pressure here and if someone is stuck on the sparkle, it's often because we are not used to this type of communication in such a setting so we take the pressure off each other Ask the group to try to be brave with their words/sparkles if they can but also know we can use the phone signal with their hand to 'phone a friend' and the group can support them by suggesting a sparkle.

A large, yellow sticky note with a white border and a white shadow, attached to the page with an orange tab at the top left. The note contains eight horizontal blue lines for writing.