

Introduction

Sometimes a teaching-learning process becomes tiring. When interest and attention of the participants wanes, it is time for an energizer. A trainer must raise the energy level of the participants when mental exhaustion threatens to set in. In such a situation, **energizers** can be an appropriate tool to wake up the participants.

When to use

- Energizers can be used any time the participants' energy or attention is flagging. For example, after lunch, participants have a tendency to feel sleepy. An energizer can be very helpful to bring back their concentration.
- Energizers can also be used to encourage a feeling of group belonging. This is useful at the beginning of a training or after sharp differences of opinions.
- Energizers can be used before a discussion to help promote uninhibited dialogue, and to lighten the atmosphere.

Choosing a suitable energizer

Energizers will work with all groups if a suitable selection is made. Many books are available on energizers. When you choose an energizer, consider:

- **The cultural background:** If the participants are from the same culture, choose an energizer, which fits the culture. If the participants are from different cultures, be sure the energizer does not make them feel uncomfortable. In certain cultures, people may not like to touch each other openly or be placed too close to each other. In this case avoid energizers which demand close physical contact.

- **Gender:** If there are female participants, consider their cultural background, and degree of shyness.
- **Time available:** Consider the time available in the schedule of a course, so that other sessions will not be affected. Some energizers require 1-2 hours.
- **Safety:** The safety of the participants should be the first priority. Don't use energizers which can be dangerous.
- **Handicapped participants:** How will the activity affect handicapped participants? Match the energizer to the capability of all participants.
- **Shy and reluctant participants:** If faced with shy and reluctant participants, try to find out the reasons for their non-participation, and then try to convince them. If they are still not ready to participate, appoint them as observers.
- **Previous experience of participants:** If the participants are already familiar with an energizer, do not give a long explanation, start the activity promptly. Better yet, select a different energizer.

Conducting an energizer

- **Select the site:** Match the site (inside, outside, grass, concrete...) to the energizer.
- **Organize the site:** Provide enough space to conduct the energizer. Allow no obstacles to lie on the floor or the ground. The site should be clean and safe.
- **Decide on observers or assistants:** Consider if any voluntary assistance or observers are needed from among the participants
- **Provide instructions:** Provide short, oral instructions and start the activity.
- **Provide materials:** Obtain materials before conducting the activity. Provide them in

sufficient quantities. This eliminates the risk of having to interrupt the activity.

- **Monitor the activity:** There are two occasions when the trainer should intervene. The first is when any action appears to present a safety hazard. The second is when a stop in the action is needed to ask the group to examine how it is proceeding when they seem to be stuck. The trainer should be present until the activity ends.
- **Conduct a debriefing:** Debrief immediately after each activity. Guide the group towards critical reflection of what has just happened. Concentrate on the stated objectives of the energizer. A debriefing of ten to fifteen minutes is sufficient in most cases.

Hints and tips

- *Encourage laughter and fun.*
- Don't tell the participants what you are going to do. Knowing what is coming reduces the surprise and novelty of the challenge.
- Try to use energizers which are relevant to the learning objectives.
- Choose energizers in which success is likely.
- Be enthusiastic when conducting an energizer.

Conclusion

One of the prime responsibilities of an instructor is to sustain the interest, attention and energy level of the participants during training sessions. So, check these levels constantly and if they seem low - consider using an energizer. The time spent on the energizer is far outweighed by the increase in concentration, positive group feelings and the enjoyment of your participants.

Title: Mountain Walk

Summary: 8-16 people are on one side of 4 mountain peaks. They have to cross the 4 mountain peaks to the other side with tied rubber strips on their ankles.

Objectives: Problem solving, interdependence and trust building.

Materials:

- Two 3-4 m lengths of rope laid out 4-5 m apart and parallel to each other. These represent the distance from one side of the mountains to the other side.
- Four elastic hoops spaced 30-40 cm from each other between the two ropes (these represent the mountain peaks).
- Cut strips of automobile tyre 3-4 cm wide. The strips should be one number less than the number of people.

Timing: 20-30 min

Procedure:

1. Form two groups.
2. With a group on the start side of the rope, ask participants to form a line.
3. Give all but one participant an elastic strip.
4. Tell participants to link themselves together at the ankles by the rubber strips. These strips should link them in an unbroken line, so that only the first and last person has a free leg.
5. Tell them they must not step outside of the hoops, if so, the group must return to the start.
6. When the group is ready, signal to begin.
7. Repeat with the second group.
8. Debrief.

Commentary: This is a good energizer to show how individual actions affect others when working in a group.

Variations: Vary the distance and angles between hoops to change the challenge level.

Title: Scarlet Letter

Summary: Each member of a group of 20 or more is given an index card with a black letter on one side and a red letter on the other. Their task is to create three-, four-, and five-letter words. Every 30-60 seconds participants group together to form a different word using their letters. If they fail to form a word they are eliminated. The exercise ends when four participants remain.

Objectives: Large group energizer, competition, team building.

Materials:

- Print large capital letters in red on index cards. A set of 50 would have A(5), B(1), C(1), D(2), E(6), F(1), G(2), H(1), I(5), L(2), M(1), N(3), O(4), P(1), R(3), S(2), T(3), U(2), V(1), W(1), Y(1) and one wild card with a dot(.) on it. On the back of the cards write the same combination of letters in black (front and back letters may be different). Avoid creating a card with two vowels, two wild cards or a wild card and a vowel.

- A stop watch.
- A whistle.

Timing: 15-25 minutes

Procedure:

1. Hand out the cards.
2. Notify that three letter words can be formed by black letters only. Four letter words must be formed with red letters only. Five letter words must be

formed of both red and black letters. A dot on the card means that it is a wild card and may be used for any consonant but not a vowel. Whenever they hear the signal, they must listen carefully as the number of signals indicates the number of letters in the next word.

3. Time allowed is 30 seconds for three-letter words; 45 seconds for four-letter words; and 60 seconds for five-letter words.
4. When all participants are ready signal to begin.
5. Continue until there is a winning team.
6. Debriefing is optional.

**Performance Guide
Use Energizers**

Did the instructor**Before the activity, consider:**

1. the cultural background of the participants?
2. their gender?
3. the time available?
4. the safety precautions?
5. the participation of handicapped?
6. the participation of shy and reluctant participants?
7. the previous experience of participants?
8. the degree of difficulty of the energizer?
9. the site?
10. the site organization?
11. the need for observers, or assistants?

During the activity:

1. provide instructions?
2. provide sufficient materials?
3. monitor the activity?
4. intervene if necessary?

After the activity:

1. conduct a debriefing?

For an effective energizer, all steps should