



Icebreakers for Break Time

Background – Often substance use and co-occurring groups can be longer in length, especially in Intensive Outpatient Program and Partial Care and in some residential programs. In longer group sessions there is often time set aside for breaks. Quite often, depending on the rules of the program or the facility, some group members may use that time to smoke cigarettes or vape use other nicotine products. Rather than just standing around killing time smoking or vaping, the activities listed here can be given out as group assignments so that group members can use break time more productively. These break time assignments can then be later discussed and processed in the group therapy setting once group reconvenes.

Group Challenges:

Nicotine Free Challenge - Try not to smoke, vape or use any habit-forming product during the break. When you get back to group try to be ready to share what coping skills you used and what worked the best for you

No Complaint Break – Try to go the entire break only talking about positive things without complaining about anything going on in your life. Be prepared what it was like individually to go without complaining and how did this challenge affect the group as a whole while on break

Silent Break – Take a break where the entire group stays quiet and uses the time for quiet relaxation and self-reflection rather than talking. When back in the group be prepared to discuss if the group was able to do this successfully. If not, what went wrong and what was difficult. If you were successful, what was it like?

Share the Positivity – Everyone's assignment is to spend break time being encouraging with one another. Everyone should try to focus their break time conversation on being supportive and upbuilding to other group members by letting others know what you believe they are doing well with.

Restricted Topics – The group should take break and agree not to discuss anything at all related to mental health or substances and just keep it to discussing personal interests and topics outside of the treatment goals of the program.

Individual Group Assignments

Interview – During break time each member should spend a few minutes with another group member and do a brief interview session. When group reconvenes, everyone should discuss what they learned about someone else in the group

Interesting Discussion Ideas – Everyone in the group has the individual assignment to think of an interesting topic to discuss for the next part of group therapy after the break. When group reconvenes for therapy, there are two choices for follow up:

- As a group vote on one topic that someone came up with and then discuss that topic for the next segment of group therapy time
- Or rather than vote on one topic, divide up the remaining group therapy time and allow each person to discuss their topic for a few minutes (For example, each group members topic gets 5 minutes for discussion)

My Favorite – This should be an easy one. Everyone in the group should spend some time thinking about something that is their favorite (Favorite food, sports team, musical performer, etc.) Everyone should share what favorite they thought about while on break



Three Things Going Right in My Life – Everyone should come up with three things (no matter how small) that are going well in life at this time and then discuss them with the group when group returns for therapy

“I’ve Never Shared About…” – During break each person should come up with something that they have never shared in group before, but they are now ready to talk about. Discuss these when group therapy resumes

Unique – Every group member should try to come up with one or two things about themselves that they believe makes them unique from the rest of the group. Discuss when group reconvenes

I Never – Try to think of something that many people have done but you have never done that you are willing to share about when group continues

“You’re Not Going to Believe This…” – Try to think of something unbelievable that you have experienced or witnessed or know about and then discuss these as a group after break

I Don’t Know (But I Want To) – Everyone in the group should try to think about something that they are willing to admit that they don’t know or understand and then discuss these together as a group after break

Come up with an Example – Before group breaks, the group leader should come up with a topic or a descriptive word and then everyone in the group should come up with an example that they can discuss later after the break. (Some ideas – Come up with something: Weird, Funny, Puzzling, Inspiring, Fascinating, etc.)

You Lead for Five – When the group gets back together, everyone in the group will get five minutes to lead the group. Come up with an interesting way to use your five minutes where you oversee the group activity.

Cooperative Group Assignments – *(Things the group should try to work on together during break)*

Take a Vote – As a group come up with an interesting topic to vote on and then take an unsupervised vote on the topic and then discuss the outcome when group therapy resumes

Organize – This is an advanced challenge that is very wide open for a creative group. See if the group can organize by coming up with a shared idea everyone agrees with. This could involve the group coming up with any one idea (preferably something positive) that can be discussed when the group gets back together (Some examples “Lets make Taco Tuesdays where we all pool our money together and order Mexican food” or “Lets organize a talent show”)

Story Telling Idea – As a group come up with an interesting topic that everyone should be prepared to tell a story about when the group reconvenes. (For example, “Tell a story from your childhood about a time when....”)

Group Rule – As a group, come up with a group rule that will apply for the rest of the group when everyone gets back for therapy. It can be a serious rule or perhaps something amusing or anything in between as long as they group agrees on it and it is appropriate and reasonable

Commonalities – See if the group can have a discussion and make a list of things that everyone in the group has in common. Discuss the list when group resumes

Group Name – Work together as a group to come up with an interesting name for the group and then discuss this idea when group is back together

We Agree! – As a group come up with something interesting that everyone agrees on. Be prepared to discuss why you chose this answer and what it means to the group as a whole