

## Peer Support Tip Sheet: Ice-breakers

*This tip sheet is a very brief introduction to icebreakers. To learn more using icebreakers, give us a call. PeerNetBC offers training sessions throughout the year and customizes training for many groups.*

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### What are ice-breakers and why are they important?

Ice-breakers are techniques that allow participants to interact with each other in non-traditional ways. They help participants “warm up” to discussions or decisions that will occur during a session. PeerNetBC recognizes that power differences cause some participants to hold back; ice-breakers start the process of equalizing voices. Getting to know new people can be intimidating or fun – we support the latter! Ice breakers assist people to think outside the box and break down social barriers to engagement. Building trust with laughter and movement can help groups navigate more easily through conflict.

### What do ice-breakers look like?

Ice-breakers need to be physically and emotionally accessible to all participants. Some groups may have a hard time ‘playing a game’ so it’s important to find the right words for the right group. Youth love “games” but some adults may need to be coaxed into “session starters”. Knowledge of the room’s physical set-up and some information about participants will help you plan effective ice-breakers.

### Move Yer Butt

Participants form a circle sitting in chairs with one person standing in the middle – do not include an extra chair in the circle for that person. The person in the middle needs to find a chair. The person in the centre begins by saying, “Move yer butt if you....” and adds a thing that is true about himself or herself. Those for whom the statement is also true get up and find a new chair; the person in the middle also tries to get a chair. Participants can’t move to the chair next to them, and those who feel uncomfortable with any statement may remain seated. The person left standing begins the next round.

If mobility is an issue, ask participants sit or stand in a circle. Each person takes a turn saying, “Move yer butt if....” People step into or wheel into the middle if the statement is true for them. Then they move back out into the circle for the next person’s statement.

### Mixer

Ask participants to pair up with someone they don’t know well and find three things they have in common. Give participants 3 minutes to do this. Then ask participants to link up with another pair (4 people in total) and find 3 different things in common among the group. Give participants 4 minutes to do this. Keep doubling the groups and requesting 3 things in common until you have the full group seeking commonalities, until the groups are large enough but not unwieldy, or until you use all the available time!

**If used properly, ice-breakers aren’t just a time-filler –  
they’re an effective team-building technique!**



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