

Global Justice Icebreakers

Alphabet balloons

A simple competitive game that can be played in teams or pairs.

Set up a 'net', separating two areas (could be a row of chairs). Play volleyball with the balloon. Introduce new rule: Players can only hit the balloon after saying a word in the correct alphabetical sequence. Max three hits per side. Before play begins each time set the 'theme'. For example: animals, countries, cities or food.

Example: Theme is animals.

Team A says "Aardvark" and serves over net.

Team B says "Baboon", hits once, "Badger", hits again, balloon crosses net.

Team A says "Crocodile", hits balloon over.

Team B says 'Dog,' hits once but balloon doesn't reach net, can't think of another animal in time to hit balloon again. Point to Team A.

Team B serves, theme is animals, starting from E.



Unfair memory game

Give half the group pen and paper on arrival. Having welcomed everyone, tell them that you're going to play a game that requires them to remember all the items they are going to be shown on a tray. Tell those that have pen and paper that they can use them to help (but do not allow the others to get anything to write with). You may also give some paper to a couple of the group (and allow them to borrow a pen, if someone else will let them – but don't suggest it).

Bring in a tray and tell them they have two minutes to remember everything. After 30 seconds, tell a couple of the ones without writing materials that they have



to turn away from the tray.

Watch the time, give them a ten second countdown and then cover the tray up or take it away.

Ask those who had pens and paper to pair up with those who didn't, and ask those who didn't to list what was on the tray.

Ask everyone to stand, then say 'Could everyone who got 20 items please sit down?' then 19 and so on, leaving those with the lowest scores still standing at the end.

Debrief by asking – how did it feel to be given/not given pen and paper? How did it feel for those with paper only? How did those who had to turn away from the tray early feel? Did these resources mean that the final result was conclusive? How does this relate to the world we live in?

Finally, ask them what connects the items on the tray.

Food – apple/bread

Water – glass of water

Education – pencil, text book

Sanitation – toilet roll, hand sanitiser

Energy – light bulb, battery

Health/Medication – Paracetamol and medicine bottle

Access to home/family – door keys and family photograph

Freedom (of religion/speech etc) – Bible, crucifix

Technology/Communication – USB and mobile phone

Opportunity for employment – job advert

Climate change – photo of pollution

The connection is that these are all areas where injustice exists within the world.

Paper plane unfair game

Ask students to throw a dice. If they get anything other than a six ask them to put their dominant hand behind their back. If you're getting to the end of the group and no one has rolled a six, change the rules and say for the remaining people, they only have to put their dominant hand behind their back if they get under three (the idea is to end up with a room with most people who are disadvantaged, but a couple who have the use of both hands).



Give each student a piece of scrap paper and ask them to make a paper aeroplane. If someone with one hand is particularly good, get them to make two and give the best one to someone who has two hands (and 'accidentally' damage the one they still have).

Then tell them that there is competition to get a good job and the person whose plane flies the furthest will get the job. Invite them to stand in a line and 'interview' (throw their plane).

Make those who are one-handed start further back. Go to greet them with a handshake as if to welcome them to the interview, then look at them and quickly withdraw your hand. As they make their attempt, say things like, "I'm not sure why this one bothered to apply, have you seen the area he's from?" The point of this task is to show them disadvantage and injustice. When someone with both hands walks in, greet them warmly saying, "So good to see you! I'm sure your father was in my polo club!" and allow them to start further forward.

Notes: This game is all about experiencing 'It's not fair'. Ask them how it felt to have everything rigged against them. When they knew from the start that they were less likely to achieve, did they feel it wasn't worth trying?

Charity or justice?

Split group into two groups. Split room into two sections. Throw in a large number of scrunched up paper balls. The winning team has least paper balls in their half after 20 seconds – 10 points to the winner, 0 to the loser. Only one ball should be in a hand at any time.

Play multiple rounds, finding excuses to continually disadvantage one team ("You arrived late", "You looked at me funny", "I prefer their style" etc.), for example by:

Making their area larger than the other.

Making them sit down.

Giving the other team an extra five seconds after the minute is up.

When this team starts losing badly and complaining, give them points to make it level, but play on with the same rules so they start losing again.

Discussion: Let's talk about the game we played at the start. What was wrong with it? (Not fair). Were you happy with "Oh, just have some more points, then play on"? (No, still not fair. Game continued to be biased/



unfair/go wrong).

Ask group to remind you about causes and consequences of poverty.

So, is it enough to say "Oh, just have some more food/money/charity then carry on"? (No – just like the game – that doesn't deal with the root causes, although it might help some consequences.)

Why does thinking about causes and consequences matter? It's crucial to how we respond – we need a range of solutions.

We need justice

Don't worry – it looks complicated but is simple really!

Sit young people in a circle (approx. 10-12 – if larger group than this, then use this number to demonstrate then split into separate circles).

Turn to person on your right (player 1) and say, "We need justice."

Player 1 responds "What?"

You respond "Justice."

Hand player 1 the printed word.

Player 1 turns to the person on their right (player 2) and says, "We need justice."

Player 2 responds "What?"

Player 1 turns back to you and says "What?"

You tell player 1 "Justice."

Player 1 tells player 2 "Justice," and passes them the printed word.

Player 2 turns to player 3 and says "We need justice."

3 to 2: "What?"

2 to 1: "What?"

1 to you: "What?"

You to 1: "Justice."

1 to 2: "Justice."

2 to 3: "Justice."

Passes paper, etc.

At the same time, in exactly the same way, pass 'Charity' round in the other direction.

Everybody wins if both charity and justice go round the circle with no mistakes. If it goes wrong, start again, beginning somewhere else in the circle.



The string game

Give a group of between six and ten people a piece of string and ask them to form a circle with it, with each of them having two hands on the string (one person will hold two ends of the string in one hand).

Tell them that this is a game based on trust, they need to close their eyes and not look.

Ask them to then create a triangle with the string, with their eyes closed, and with everyone still connected to the string.

After a couple of minutes, give a ten second count down, and ask them to open their eyes. Some may have done it well, while others might be quite off – ask them to consider what worked well, and what didn't.

Tell them that you are going to ask them to make other shapes, but give them a couple of minutes to work out a strategy (some people may give each team member a number, some may ask one person to take the lead and so on).

Ask them to return to a circle, then close their eyes and ask them to create a square.

Again, give them a couple of minutes, a ten second count down and see how they got on.

Finally, ask them to stand in a straight line with each of them holding the string.

This time ask them to close their eyes, and create the number 2.

Ask them to open their eyes and check how they have done. Did their strategy continue to work, or did the change in context (not all in a circle holding the string) mean that the strategy was unhelpful?

The learning around this game is that we need to listen and be in dialogue to find solutions to problems, and that strategies may work initially but need tweaking when the context changes. From a justice perspective, we also need to be able to empathise (not simply sympathise) with others; we need to see a situation from their perspective.

