

GROUP JUGGLE

Invite everyone to stand in a circle in an open space, if that is available, at their chairs if not. Ask everyone to put one hand in the air. Give a small stuffed animal to the person next to you and ask that person to call the name of someone in the group and throw the stuffed animal to that person. That person, in turn calls a name and throws it to the named person. This continues until everyone has been called and had the stuffed animal thrown to them. Once a person has been called, he/she takes his/her hand down so others know not to throw it to him/her. Each person must pay attention to whom they throw the stuffed animal, because they will repeat the same pattern again and again.

The first time around, a pattern is created: each person is thrown the stuffed animal only once. The last person to get it throws it back to the person who started it. Ask the group to repeat the pattern, but do it faster. Remind them that it is important to call the name before throwing it. After it has been thrown to a few people into the pattern, throw a new stuffed animal to the starting person. In a little bit, add another and another, until there are 4-7 animals all flying around the group. Keep them going around continuously for a while.

At some point call "Halt, everyone stop where you are." Then ask them to reverse the pattern. That is, tell them to throw to the one who originally threw to them. Allow this to go on for a bit, and then collect the animals as they come back to the starting person next to you. Have everyone return to their seats.

You can do a pass of the talking piece for people to share their thoughts on how this felt, but it is not essential. You may comment on the busyness of our lives and the many things we juggle. This activity brings in humor and tends to break up the stiffness people often feel coming into a new setting. It also begins weaving the group together as a community.