

Awesome Icebreakers

Presented by Michelle Cummings M.S. of Training Wheels



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Michelle Cummings M.S. is the Big Wheel and founder of Training Wheels, a known leader in the Team Development industry. She is an accomplished author and sought-after speaker and consultant on leadership, teambuilding, and experiential learning. Michelle has created a wide variety of facilitation, debriefing and teambuilding activities that have collectively changed the way trainers and educators work. Michelle is also the co-founder and Chief Creative Officer for Personify Leadership, a leadership development company.

Michelle has delivered innovative leadership programs for hundreds of camps and non-profit organizations. Michelle works with professional associations, corporations, universities, and non-profit organizations throughout the world. Her online teambuilding gear site has over 350 different books, activities and kits dedicated to the teambuilding field.

Michelle speaks at more than 20 local, national, and international conferences each year and authors a monthly teambuilding newsletter called [*The Spokesperson*](#) that has over 23,000 subscribers in 100 countries. Michelle Cummings has authored six books, 1. [*A Teachable Moment*](#) 2. [*Bouldering Games for Kids*](#) 3. [*Playing With a Full Deck*](#) 4. [*Setting the Conflict Compass*](#) 5. [*Facilitated Growth*](#) and 6. [*Team Building From the Toy Aisle*](#). She has two new books coming out this year, 1. [*Table Top Team Building*](#) and 2. [*Storytelling as Experiential Education: Building Resilience, Leadership and Community*](#). She also designed a unique course for teaching new facilitators called [*Experiential Facilitation 101*](#).

Michelle also write a novel called [*The Reel Sisters*](#), a story about a group of women fly fishers that was released November 4, 2017.

Michelle received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Kansas State University and her Masters degree in Experiential Education from Minnesota State University at Mankato. Michelle currently lives in Littleton, CO with her husband, Paul, and two sons.

As If

Divide your group into pairs. Begin this activity by letting participants know that you will give them a relationship role to play for the upcoming interaction. Have the pairs stand about 15 feet apart from one another. Have them determine which partner will be the "greeter" and which partner will play out the "role." Each interaction is approximately 20–30 seconds in duration. Then announce the first interaction. Ask your group to greet another person in the room AS IF you are: college roommates, a famous musician, a colleague you had a conflict with.

Icebreaker Wheelies

Are you tired of asking the same questions to open your programs? Here is a unique collection of questions that will breathe new life into your openers. Our favorite way to use these cards is to let the participants ask each other the questions as an icebreaker exchange. Hand one card to each participant. Ask them to find a partner and share their response to the question on their card. After the two have each shared their response, have them exchange cards and find a new partner. Encourage 6-7 partner exchanges. Here are a few examples:

1. If you could design any new ride at a famous amusement park, what would it be?
2. What is your favorite restaurant to eat at?
3. Who was your all-time favorite teacher and why?
4. If you could open your own retail store, what type of merchandise would you sell?
5. What is a current television show that you enjoy watching?
6. If you lived on a farm, which chore above all others would you definitely not want to do?
7. If you could possess one unique superpower, what would it be?
8. What is your favorite old-time movie and why?



Protector Destroyer

Phase 1: pick one person as your protector, one as your destroyer. You must keep your protector between yourself and your destroyer at all times. Phase 2: pick one person as your protector, one as your bully. You must keep your protector between yourself and your destroyer at all times. Phase 3: Pick one person as the bully, one as your victim of bullying. You are the protector and you must keep yourself between your bully and the victim of bullying at all times.

Championship Rock, Paper, Scissors

This is a fun, light-hearted, competitive (and noisy) activity. Ask everyone to find a partner and play Rock, Paper, Scissors. The person who wins the match advances, the person who lost joins the winner's "team" as an enthusiastic fan and cheerleader. Winners continue to play by finding another undefeated participant to play against, while their growing fan bases cheers them on. Play until one person wins the final match and all the fans. Congratulations!

Olympic Rock, Paper, Scissors

Demonstrate to the group 3 different areas, one for Bronze, one for Silver, and one for Gold. Everyone starts out in the Bronze area. Ask them to find a partner and play Rock, Paper, Scissors. The person who wins the match advances to the Silver area. The person who lost stays in Bronze and finds a new person to play with. Once in the Silver area, players find a partner and play again. Whoever wins advances to the Gold area. Whoever loses returns to the Bronze area. Game continues for 3 minutes. Have fun!

Rock Paper Scissors Splitz

Have participants pair up and start the game being toe to toe with one another. Play one round of RPS, whoever wins takes their front foot and puts it directly behind their back foot. Whoever loses that round must slide their front foot forward to meet toe to toe with their opponent again. Another round of RPS is played. Whoever wins takes their front foot and puts it directly behind their back foot. Whoever loses that round must slide their front foot forward to meet toe to toe with their opponent again. This continues until someone loses their balance and falls over or ends up in the splits! 😊

Ubuntu Cards or Spot It Cards

Ubuntu cards encourage a group to interact, find connections and have fun. The cards are a great tool for limitless reflection through metaphor, but we have also discovered that they offer endless opportunities for group interaction and creative play. Here are a few activities with which we have had success. Try these, but also create your own interactive experiences. After your group has played with them they too will start to come up with variations – which is another powerful teambuilding initiative!

Common Bond (large group, played with multi-image side)

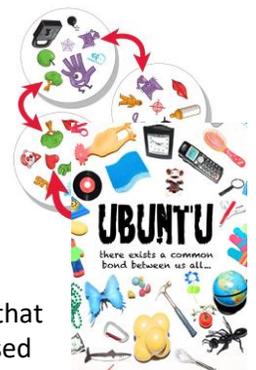
Give a card to each person in the group. Challenge everyone to pair up and find a matching item on their cards. When they do find a match, have them try to find something else in their lives that they have in common, a common bond. Once they are successful, have them move on to a new person and repeat the activity.

Blind Find (Any size group, played with multi-image side)

Give a card to each person in the group and ask everyone to find a partner. Tell the group that (on your signal) they should study their own card for 20 seconds. Time can be adjusted based on age and ability of participants. Then, tell participants to hold their cards face down against their leg and then try to identify the common image between the two cards. After success, find a new partner and try again.

Championship Find (Large group, played with the multi-image side)

This is a fun, light-hearted, competitive (and noisy) activity. Give each person a card and ask everyone to find a partner. On your signal, have the partners turn over their cards and race to find the matching image. The person who finds the match first wins and takes the opponent's card. The person who lost joins the winner's "team" as an enthusiastic fan and cheerleader. Winners continue to play by finding another undefeated participant to play against, while their growing fan bases cheers them on. Play until one person has all the cards and all the fans. Congratulations! There are 25+ games you can play with Ubuntu Cards.



52 Card Pick UP

This activity comes from our [Stack the Deck cards](#). Place all 52 cards with the image side face down on the floor or tabletop. You will need lots of space for participants to move around and perform various tasks. Explain to the group that the objective is to pick all 52 cards up before explaining the following rules:

1. **You may only pick one card up at a time.**
2. **You must perform the task written on the card before picking up another card.**
3. **If you choose not to perform the task on the card, simply return the card face down on the floor.**
4. **Your card is for your eyes only. You are not to share what is written on your card with other group members.**
5. **Enjoy the game.**

Additional thoughts: 52 cards are ideal for groups of 8-15 participants. For larger groups you will need an additional set of cards. Also, some facilitators like to cover the 52 Card Pick Up section with a small Post It Note while doing other activities. This prevents the group from reading the prompts ahead of time.

Debriefing points: First, let the group go around and read off a few of the ‘covert’ operations that went on during the activity. These are silly in nature, but there are many debriefing points you can relate to real life. Here are a few pointers to ask: How is this activity like everyday life? How are the behaviors demonstrated in this activity like interacting in a group setting? Each behavior demonstrated in this activity could relate to a behavior in the real world.

Grand Prix Racing

Begin by spreading several [Raccoon Circles](#) around the available space, in close proximity to each other. Ask participants to join one of the “racing teams”, picking their favorite color team in the process. You’ll need approximately 5 to 10 participants per Raccoon Circle. Have participants hold the Raccoon Circle with both hands in front of them.

Ladies and Gentlemen! It is summertime, and that means one thing in this part of the world - Grand Prix Racing! Now I know that you are such die-hard race fans that just the thought of a race makes your heart beat faster. So, this race comes in three parts. First, when I say that “we’re going to have a race”, your response is a “Tim the Tool Man” response (sort of a grunting version of ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-O!) Next, I’ll say, “Start your engines!” and I want to hear your best race car sounds (audience practices making race car revving engine, shifting gears and braking sounds).

Finally, with so many cars on the track today, it will be difficult to see just which group finishes their race first, so we’ll need a sign indicating when your group is finished. That sign is to raise your hands (and the Raccoon Circle) above your heads and yell “Yessssssss!”

Logistically, Grand Prix involves having the group transfer the knot around the group as quickly as possible, using only their hands. This activity can even be performed for a seated audience. To begin, you’ll need a “start / finish” line, which can be the person that was born the farthest distance away from the present location. The race begins at this location and ends when the knot is passed around the circle and returns to this same location (Yessssssss!)

Typically, in Raccoon Circle Grand Prix racing, there are three qualifying rounds or races. The first race is a single lap race to the right, with the knot traveling once around the inside of the

Recommended Publications

[A Teachable Moment](#), a Facilitator's Guide to Activities for Processing, Debriefing, Reviewing, and Reflecting. Jim Cain, Michelle Cummings, Jennifer Stanchfield, 2004. Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 2004.

[Essential Staff Training Activities](#), Jim Cain, Claire Marie Hannon and Dave Knobbe, Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 2009.

[Facilitated Growth: Experiential Activities for Recovery and Wellness](#), by Michelle Cummings, Marc Pimsler and Diane Sherman. Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa, 2017

[Islands of Healing](#), A Guide to Adventure Based Counseling by Jim Schoel, Dick Prouty and Paul Radcliffe, 1989, 301 pp. Project Adventure, www.pa.org

[Lasting Lessons](#), Clifford Knapp, 1992, ISBN 1-880785-06-4, ERIC Publishing, PO Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325

[Reflective Learning: Theory and Practice](#). Sugarman, D. Doherty, K., Garvey, D., Gass, M. Kendall Hunt Publisher, 2000.

[Open to Outcome](#), Micah Jacobsen and Mari Ruddy, 2005, Wood N Barnes Publishing.

[Processing Pinnacle](#), An Educator's Guide to Better Processing by Steve Simpson, PhD, Dan Miller & Buzz Bocher, 2006, Wood N Barnes Publishing.

[Processing The Experience](#), Second Edition; John L.Luckner, Reldan S.Nadler, Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 1997.

[Setting the Conflict Compass](#), Activities for Conflict Resolution and Prevention, Michelle Cummings with Mike Anderson, Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 2010.

Host a Training Wheels Workshop or Training Event

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Experiential Facilitation 101

Join Michelle in a 3-day class that teaches 45 essential skills in experiential facilitation. This workshop is an introductory class for the team building facilitator. This training provides an important first step in building the foundational skills necessary to lead experiential programs.

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Need new tools for your trainer toolbox? Why not learn from one of the masters? Bring Michelle out to the location of your choice and spend a day filling your brain and your bag of tricks with new and innovative activities.

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The Spokesperson E-Newsletter

[The Spokesperson e-newsletter](#), Tips for Trainers and Wheel of a Deal Wednesday emails are free services that subscribers can anticipate receiving once a week. The content varies from an Activity of the Month, a Book of the Month, a Non-Prop Activity of the Month, and great facilitator tips and tools. You will receive fresh ideas and innovative activities each week to enhance your facilitation skills and practice.

Each person who signs up is entitled to a copy of the free e-book, *Playing with a Full Deck*. It has 9 sample activities from Michelle Cummings book, [Playing with a Full Deck](#), 52 Team Activities Using a Deck of Cards. The link for this book will be emailed to you when you subscribe to the newsletter.

Sign Up Online at www.training-wheels.com



Online Games Database

Are you ready to roll?

Check out Training Wheels subscription-based Online Games Database. This subscription-based database gives you and your facilitator's access to over 400 experiential teambuilding games. Each activity will have photos, and most will have video clips as well (eventually). Activities are from many of the classic activity books facilitators use to get rolling as well as activities that have been presented at conferences and many new activity books. Some of the activities will require specific props, but with a little creativity you can create some of them on your own. Best quality is it is online so if you have your smart phone or tablet available you can pull it up in an instant.

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