



Target Audience: Adults

Spice Up Your Family Reunion/BBQ

Activity

Family Heritage

Duration: 35-60 minutes,
depending on the size of the group
Group Size: 20+

Materials:

- 3x5 Index Cards
- Pen/Pencils

Goal

Family members will learn more about their extended family and feel reconnected to each other in a way that will make them want to continue building stronger relationships.

Description

You just received the invitation to your family's annual gathering and images of last year's event flash through your mind: screaming babies; awkward conversations with your elderly aunt and uncles; that weird hug from the guy you're not even sure is a part of your family; your envy of all the teenagers sitting on their cell phones, not engaging with anybody. But you're obligated to show your face or your mother will never let you live it down...

Why not make this year's gathering an opportunity to have fun with and grow closer to your family? This activity allows people of all ages to come together and engage with each other in an easy, open, spirited atmosphere. Not only does this activity offer a way to beat the family reunion boredom, but the post-reflection component really enables people to let down their guard and open up with each other in ways they never thought possible. This activity has been tested and proven to encourage communication and establish deeper bonds within families.



Directions

Part 1: (15-20 minutes)

1. Have the group line up by: how long it took them to learn to ride a bike; month/-day of birth; the number of times they've ordered take out in the last week; etc.
2. Give each person a 3X5 index card and a pen or pencil and have them write their name at the top
3. Split the group into pairs, have the partners switch notecards and then announce that everyone will now mingle with everybody EXCEPT their partner to find out as much about their partner as they can in 10 minutes

Part 2: (10-20 minutes)

1. Pairs come back together
2. Each participant introduces their partner to the group with the information they learned from the group
3. After being introduced, each person gets 1 minute to share whatever else they feel is important for the family to know about them

Part 3: (10-20 minutes)

1. After each person is introduced to the group, ask everybody to answer the reflection questions in circles of 5-10 people, following the guidelines for the Circle Discussion (If the setting doesn't enable circles, you can pair them up or put them in smaller groups).
2. The discussion should be based on the Rules of the Roundtable, which will turn any discussion into a powerful emotional and social experience.



Directions

(continued)

Reflection Questions

- 1.** What was it like to learn about a member of your family/people in your family you didn't know that well?
- 2.** What did you learn or experience that surprised you most?
- 3.** How can you use what you learned to continue getting to know your partner/member(s) of your family?
- 4.** Each person gives a compliment to the person sitting on their right.



Supplementary materials

Rules of the workshop

(Take turns reading a rule out loud):

- 1.** No one is more important or less important. We're all equal, and very important.
- 2.** We don't argue, interrupt, or say anything that would diminish what another has said.
- 3.** Imagine we have a pot in the center of the circle, and we are adding ingredients to a soup that we will all enjoy, each tries to add some good thing to compliment what the previous person has contributed.
- 4.** We strive to come to an answer out of our connection, just like how we were only able to succeed in the game by feeling and thinking together.
- 5.** We are all listening closely to the person holding the speaking object.

Clips:

- 1.** The Power of Compliments
- 2.** The Secret To A Happy Family
- 3.** The Pig of Happiness
- 4.** What Do People Need?



Supplementary materials

(continued)

Quotes:

- “How we feel, what we know, whom we marry, whether we fall ill, how much money we make, and whether we vote all depend on the ties that bind us. Social networks spread happiness, generosity, and love. They are always there, exerting both subtle and dramatic influence over our choices, actions, thoughts, feelings, even our desires. And our connections do not end with the people we know. Beyond our own social horizons, friends of friends of friends can start chain reactions that eventually reach us, like waves from distant lands that wash up on our shores.”

Dr. Nicholas Christakis, Dr. James Fowler

- “When this book was first published in 2002, I made a rash statement: “I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again.” I still believe this. I still believe that if we turn to one another, if we begin talking with each other - especially with those we call stranger or enemy - then this world can reverse its darkening direction and change for the good. And I know with all my heart that the only way the world will change is if many more of us step forward, let go of our judgments, become curious about each other, and take the risk to begin a conversation.

Our twenty-first-century world is descending into aggression, fear, and separation. War, genocide, violence, slavery, pandemics, poverty, natural disasters - all these are commonplace in this new century, despite most people's deep longing to live together in peace.

What are we going to do about this? What role do we choose to play? Do we withdraw and hope at least to live a satisfying private life? Or do we turn to one another and do what we can to birth a healthy future?”

Dr. Margaret Wheatley

Articles:

- [Creating a Positive Family Culture: The Importance of Establishing Family Traditions](#)
- [The Stories That Bind Us](#)



The Science Behind it

- Dr. George Vaillant summarized the outcome of his 60 years of studying 800 men and women in what makes humans flourish, saying, “The only thing that really matters in life are your relationships to other people,”.

3.7[1] Vaillant, G. (2002). *Ageing well: Surprising guideposts to a happier life*. Scribe Publications. Princeton

- Neuroscientist Uri Hasson showed that when someone is telling a story or expressing emotions in a group, the brains of both speaker and listeners show a neural synchrony in conversation, which is like an overall, widespread synchrony across the brain.

2.5[5] Stephens, G. J., Silbert, L. J., & Hasson, U. (2010). *Speaker–listener neural coupling underlies successful communication*. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(32), 14425-14430.

- If you have Positive Social Relations (and therefore higher levels of oxytocin), your wounds will heal better, you will experience higher pain relief, and your digestive system will work better.

3.4[3] Gouin, J. P., Carter, C. S., Pournajafi-Nazarloo, H., Glaser, R., Malarkey, W. B., Loving, T. J., ... & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2010). *Marital behavior, oxytocin, vasopressin, and wound healing*. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 35(7), 1082-1090.

3.4[4] Heinrichs, M., Baumgartner, T., Kirschbaum, C., & Ehlert, U. (2003). *Social support and oxytocin interact to suppress cortisol and subjective responses to psychosocial stress*. *Biological psychiatry*, 54(12), 1389-1398.

3.4[5] Uvnas-Moberg, K., & Petersson, M. (2005). *Oxytocin, a mediator of anti-stress, well-being, social interaction, growth and healing*. *Z Psychosom Med Psychother*, 51(1), 57-80.

3.4[6] Yang, J. (1994). *Intrathecal administration of oxytocin induces analgesia in low back pain involving the endogenous opiate peptide system*. *Spine*, 19(8), 867-871.

3.4[7] Ohlsson, B., Björgell, O., Ekberg, O., & Darwiche, G. (2006). *The oxytocin/vasopressin receptor antagonist atosiban delays the gastric emptying of a semisolid meal compared to saline in human*. *BMC gastroenterology*, 6(1), 11