

## **More than a Name: Activities to Create Connections the First Week of Camp**

**Connections:** Participants are instructed to get in a group with others with whom they share an attribute, similarity or some kind of common ground (i.e. youngest, middle, oldest or only child? OR Are you social, physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual?). Once in the smaller group, people can share an additional detail about their grouping (i.e. how many sisters and brothers?) or develop a “sell” for why their group is so special (i.e. “You can’t beat the oldest child – we’re dependable, responsible and we break in our parents for our siblings”). Once the group has “connected”, call out a new grouping and new “task” for the group.

**Hammer or Nail?:** Ask participants which of the two choices best describes them and why. This activity can be made into a game where participants go to separate sides of the room based on their choice, “high five” those who have chosen with them and create an explanation for why they’ve chosen a specific feature OR can be kept simple as questions used during cabin time to help promote sharing and conversations that are fun and different. Examples include:

- Hammer or nail
- Racket or ball
- Child or old man
- Picasso or DeVinci
- Jeans or a suit
- Egg white or egg yolk
- Sun or moon
- Cube or ball
- Present or future
- Rock group or string quartet
- Yes or no
- Mountain or valley
- Physical or mental
- Pencil or ball point pen
- Teacher or student
- Question or answer
- Leather jacket or Harris tweed
- Black or white
- Leaf or wind
- Pencil or eraser
- Earthquake or typhoon
- Tortoise or hare
- City or country
- Dictionary or novel
- Pen or pencil
- Agape or Eros
- Cat or mouse
- TV or Internet

**Identity Circles:** Draw 5 circles, each getting bigger and each surrounding the previous circle (like a target). Place your name (the name you go by) in the innermost circle. The object is to fill in the remaining circles with words that describe who you are. For example, one might be a student, a sibling, a dreamer, a woman, etc...Next, “categorize” each word by placing the descriptions that are most important to your identity closest to your name. Lastly, everyone in the group can share their identity circles with the group.

**M & M Game:** Pass around a bag on M&M’s and have each person take as many as they want. In the meantime, brainstorm as a group questions that could be asked to find out more information about others in their group. Assign colors to each question; for each color of M&M’s a person has, they have to answer the assigned questions. For example, yellow might be “your favorite hobby” and red might be “the person you look up to the most”.

**Mask Making Activity:** In pairs, participants create masks using plaster “sheets” to create a cast of each other’s face (for more specifics about logistics for this activity, Google “mask making”). Participants may choose to make a cast of half of their face (upper half/right side/left side) or their whole face (leaving space for the mouth or nostrils to breathe). The focus of the activity is to

encourage trust, communication and support between partners. Participants create the mask for their partner: they are also responsible for “checking in” and offering support to their partner while setting the cast (getting a mask made creates a level of vulnerability for participants – by creating an environment of support, the activity helps develop trust and bonding between partners). After the masks are dry, participants may paint their masks based on a specific “theme” (i.e. inside: my camp self, outside: my home self OR outside: how people see me, inside: how I see myself, etc...). A third activity can involve campers presenting their painted masks to each other. The painting activity helps campers to look inward as well as express their “true selves” to their group. Keep in mind that the mask sharing activity often gets very personal and emotional – make sure this is the direction you want to go! While emotional, this activity also creates strong bonds and understanding between campers. Debriefing each activity with discussion creates another opportunity for campers to connect with their feelings and with each other.

People to People Outlines: Participants work in pairs and are asked to trace one another on a large sheet of paper (one outline on top of another – whole bodies, hands or feet). The tracings should overlap in some areas and be independent of each other in other areas of the drawing. Then, partners can talk with one another about who they are, their lives, their hobbies & interests and other aspects of their lives. Next, in the areas on the paper where the body outlines overlap, participants write and/or illustrate commonalities. In the areas that are separate, participants write/illustrate differences. The final phase of the activity is for the whole group to come together and share their murals. The murals are shared by each participant introducing their partner to the group. After a participant has shared with the group about his/her partner (traits, interests, experiences, etc...), they can invite their partner to add anything else they wish to tell the group about themselves.

The Interview: Split the group up into pairs. Give participants a few minutes to interview their partner and then have them introduce one another to the group. It is possible to pose guiding suggestions (i.e. number of siblings, favorite hobbies, what languages you speak, etc...). This activity allows two people to get to know each other quickly and form a friendship. It’s also often easier for people to talk about others than themselves.

The Story of My Name: Where does your name come from? Share the story of where your name comes from and what it means. Everyone’s name has a surprisingly interesting origin.

Two Truths & a Lie: People write down two truths and a lie about themselves. Each person then introduces the three “facts” to the rest of the group who tries to guess the lie.

Who Is It?: Each camper writes down a little-known fact about themselves (the more unusual, the better). These facts are then read to the group and everyone tries to guess who matches which fact.