

Icebreakers And Introductions

Take A Penny: Icebreaker That Builds On Uncertainty and Curiosity

Brief Description/Purpose

The strength of this icebreaker is its use of uncertainty and curiosity to get people into the class early on, as you'll see.

Type

Icebreaker

Age Appropriate

Any age

Ideal Group Size

5-15 people. Larger than that slows down the process too much.

Time For Exercise

Depending on group size, but generally about 10-15 minutes.

Detailed Instructions If Needed

Pass around a cup full of pennies you have prepared in advance. You should screen out pennies with dates that are too far in the past.

Have each person take ONE penny.

Once each person has selected, then ask each person in turn to introduce themselves, and indicate why the year on their penny was of importance to them, or what happened that was most memorable in that year, or what they remember learning that year.

Go around the room so everyone gets to speak.

Additional Information if Available

The secret ingredient of this icebreaker is that when you hand out the penny cup, and until you explain the exercise, nobody in the group will know why you are giving them money. That sense of uncertainty creates a curiosity, capitalizing on the psychological attributes of attention. It pulls people into the class, even if they start distracted.

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