



## **THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP**

NPO 013-085 Reg. No. 2000/025903/08

P O Box 652548 Benmore 2010

Tel: +27 11 234 4837

Supportgroups@anxiety.org.za

www.sadag.org

### **Icebreaker ideas for Support Group Meetings**

- Starting a Support Group Meeting by using an icebreaker can have a phenomenal impact.
- It relaxes what can be an uncomfortable and unfamiliar experience for new Support Group Members.
- It is a great way for the Support Group Members to get to know a little bit about each other. It creates a fun and safe environment, for even the shyest of Members to feel comfortable speaking and opening up.
- The list of possible icebreakers is endless, we asked some of our current Support Group Leaders what their favourite and most successful icebreakers were.

#### **“Name the Object”**

Divide your Support Group Members into two or three Groups. Provide a short description of a physical object – it could be a type of fruit, a stationary item, cutlery, etc. You don't want to blatantly give the object away though, so try being creative in your description. Ask each Group to try guess a different item and award them 2 points if they get the answer right without a clue and award them only 1 point if they ask for a clue. Ask each Group at least 3 questions each and tally the scores to decide on a winner.

#### **“Two truths and a tale”**

Everyone must make three statements about themselves, one of which isn't true. You can give them time to think about it and write them down if need be.

They will take turns to present their statements to the rest of the Group who will guess, or vote on, which statement is the tale.

#### **“My name is?”**

Go around the Group and ask each person to state his/her name as well as an adjective that not only describes their dominant characteristic but also starts with the same letter of his/her name e.g. Lovely Lyn, Tenacious Thabo, Chatty Cassey. Write them down and refer to them by this for the rest of the evening.

#### **“Deserted Island”**

Announce, 'you've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. In addition to the essentials, you may take one piece of music, one book (which is not the bible) and one luxury item that you can carry with you i.e. not a boat to leave the island! What would you take and why?

Allow the Group a few minutes to think about it and ask them to share their three items with the rest – Group leaders, you may need to join in on this too.

#### **“Name that person”**

Divide the Group into two teams. Give each person a blank piece of paper and ask them to write down five little known facts about themselves on the paper. For example, I have a pet fish, I was born in France, my favourite food is pizza, my mom's name is Linda, and my favourite colour is turquoise.

Collect the sheets of paper per Group. The opposing team will need to try figure out who the person is in as few clues as possible. Five points are awarded if they get it right on the first clue, then 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. The team with the most points wins. (Note: if you select the most obscure facts firsts, it will increase the level of competition and general head scratching).

### **“Add words”**

The first person says a word, for example 'The'. The second person says the first word and then adds a second word of their choice, and so on. At the end you might have a complete sentence.

For example, 'The apple exploded when a boy threw an ice cube at it'. The fun part is putting twists into the sentence so that the others have a hard time coming up with a word that fits.

### **“Who am I?”**

Prepare a self-adhesive label or post it notes for each person in your Group. Write the name of a well-known person on it. It could be a famous historical figure such as Einstein, a character, current sportsman, musician, TV personality, celebrity, etc. Make sure you have a good mixture of men and women. Keeping the names hidden, stick the post-it notes on the foreheads of everyone in the Group, or on their backs. They then need to ask other Group Members questions to find out the identity of the well-known person.

Each person can take a turn to ask questions to figure out who they are. For example, am I alive? Am I female? Am I a musician? Only YES or NO questions can be asked. If the answer is no, then the turn is over. If the answer is yes, they can keep asking questions until they get a no. Keep playing until everyone has guessed, or if time is short, stop after the first few correct answers.

### **“Pass the Parcel”**

For this exercise you would use a ball or a parcel. The parcel will be passed around the Group. When the word STOP is declared, the person holding the parcel must answer a question

Some of the questions you can ask are:

- What is your favourite colour?
- What is your favourite food?
- What is your favourite hobby?
- What is your favourite number?
- What is your favourite song?

In this way, individuals are sharing info about themselves without feeling intimidated or discriminated against.

### **“A's & B's”**

Divide your Members into pairs (A & B). The pair must spend a few minutes getting to know each other.

Some of the questions they can ask are:

- What is something that not many people know about you, like a hidden talent?
- What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Go around the room and ask A to share B's answers, and B to share A's answers with the rest of the Group. The idea of not having to disclose information about themselves, puts the individual at ease and they feel more comfortable speaking in a Group setting in this way.

This works well with younger Support Group Members.

### **“Paper Planes”**

Each Member of a Group writes down their name and one or two questions they are happy to answer about themselves on a piece of paper and then fold it into a paper plane. Everyone then ‘flies’ their paper plane into the middle of a circle. Each Member of the Group chooses a plane from the circle and walks around introducing themselves and tries to find the person whose name is on their plane. Once they have been united, they get to ask them the questions on the plane. When everyone is finished, each Member of the Group introduces the person whose plane they found.

### **“Bingo”**

People bingo can be super fun, and easy to implement. Prior to your Support Group meeting ask your Support Group Members to send you a few interesting facts about themselves, for example “I can play the piano blindfolded,” “I have broken 20 bones in my body,” “I have 16 cats,” and so on.

If you don't know how many people will be attending your Group and don't have the information to contact them before hand, you can make up a few general questions, some harder and some a little easier. The players then need to find people who match with the statements, for example “I prefer dogs to cats,” “I have never been overseas,” “I hate avocado.”

There are a lot of free programmes online that can help you to generate your bingo cards. At the beginning of the meeting give everyone a bingo sheet, and an instruction to find the person the statement applies too. When they have found the person, they must ask them to sign in the block that applies to them.

The first person to complete the target, be it a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line, or even the full sheet and shouts “Bingo” wins.

### **“If you had a superpower, what would it be?”**

### **“What's your theme song?”**

If you had to describe yourself with a song, what would your theme song be? Make the Support Group Member answer by impersonating their favourite artist whilst singing their theme song to the Group. (This icebreaker works best when the Support Group Members know each other well, as some people may be reluctant to break into song at their first meeting)

### **“Toilet paper questions”**

Pass around a roll of toilet paper and ask Members to take some toilet paper, they can choose as many sleeves as they desire – once they have taken as many sleeves as they want, you reveal that for every sleeve chosen they must reveal an interesting fact about themselves.

### **'Simon says'**

When I say 'Simon says' you will do what Simon asks you to do. Like when I say, 'Simon says touch your nose', then you will touch your nose. But when I say, 'touch your nose', don't because I didn't say 'Simon says...' Building speed as you issue out instructions will increase the likelihood of someone doing the wrong thing. Everyone who does an action that 'Simon didn't say' is removed from the activity.

### **'Sentence / statement construction'**

Ask Group Members to make a sentence or statement from words. For example, 'Support', 'Group', 'care', 'friends', 'time'. This can help to understand Members' expectations of the Group.

### **Motivational cards**

Each Member chooses a card with a word or message on it. Ask them to read it to the Group and see what message they get from it, or how it applies to them.

### **Time Bomb**

Form a circle, each Member introduces themselves. The Support Group Leader starts by calling the name of one Member who they remember and throws a ball for him/her to catch. This Member then has 2 seconds to call another player and throws the ball to them and so on. Great way to grasp names.

### **“What type of animal /fruit would you be and why?”**

#### **What is your favourite comfort food**

#### **Tell us about a time in your life when you exceeded your own expectations**

#### **Tell us about your favourite 3 hobbies**

#### **Share one thing that makes you happy.**

It's been scientifically proven that if you think happy thoughts, you become happier, and that's a great way to start a meeting.

### **Crossing the midline**

Hold your nose with one hand and then hold your ear with the other hand, make sure your arms cross each other. then cross over. keep swopping and see if you can get faster.

### **Emoji icebreaker**

People choose an emoji which depicts how they feel. Those who are comfortable doing so may explain why.

### **Group check-in**

'How are you feeling right now?' You can do another check in at the end of the meeting.

### **Name one good thing that happened in the week.**

### **How much do we have in common**

Everyone stands or raises their hand. Each Member takes a turn to share how they are feeling. Anyone else in the Group who is experiencing the same feeling sits or lowers their hand. Until everyone is sitting or their hands are lowered. This 'normalises' feelings and emotions – you are not alone

### **Share five things about yourself**

Name, age, pronouns, favourite song and one thing that never fails to make them smile.

### **Strengths in your neighbour**

Everyone is put into pairs and given a few minutes to chat. Every Member writes three positive qualities of the person they chatted to and shares it with the Group. These are not facts that have been shared with them next to them, but rather how they have interpreted what the person shared. For example, Sally is an adrenalin junkie who loves skydiving, her partner may interpret this as 'Sally is adventurous and lives life to the fullest'

### **Turn to nature for inspiration**

Show the Group a picture of a nature, a tree, a mountain, an ocean or a lake, and ask the Members what they see and how it makes them feel right now.

### **Full body check-in**

Ask Members how they are feeling physically, emotionally and spiritually. Identifying emotions using pictures. Collect some pictures of with dogs with different facial expressions. Members are asked to pick one that reflects how they are feeling at that time. (Don't like dogs? You can use people, or babies or even emojis)

### **Have you ever?**

Prepare a list of questions which can only be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. These questions will begin with "Have you ever...?" Read out the questions one by one. For each question Members indicate yes, or no. Willing Members can share a short story behind that activity they have done.

### **'Breaking the stigma'**

In this activity we debunk misconceptions about our mental illness but also acknowledge the traits that we like and make us who we are. People acknowledge hurtful things that have been said to them "I am not 'abc,'" I am 'xyz'" **'I am not too sensitive, I feel things strongly and empathise with others'**

### **The most embarrassing moment you had.**

Create a playful and safe atmosphere, people feel more relatable and less intimidating.

### **What colour are you today?**

**Weather forecast**

Describe how you are feeling today or during the last week as though you were describing the weather.

**Broken telephone****Guided meditation**

Everybody closes their eyes, and we begin a guided exercise where each person visualises themselves as a tree. We visualise from the roots up and have a look around us to see where the tree is planted. After the visualisation, as each person introduces themselves, they may give a brief description or tell us something about their tree, if they choose.

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If you try any of the above, please let us know how it went. What worked, what didn't work? If you have any other icebreakers that you would like to add to the list, please send us an email to [SupportGroups@anxiety.org.za](mailto:SupportGroups@anxiety.org.za)