

Cartoon Captions

Excerpted from *Icebreakers a la Carte*

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Participants find humor in challenging situations by creating cartoons about current life stress or goals.

Goals

To find humor in a personal situation or dilemma.

To get acquainted in a lighthearted way.

Time

10-15 minutes

Materials Needed

Paper, colored markers, masking tape.

Process

1. Begin with a few open-ended questions about participant's motivations for attending the group. Solicit a few quick responses from four or five people.
 - What brought you here today?
 - What are you hoping to accomplish?
2. Summarize common motivations and comment on the benefits of a lighthearted approach to learning or problem-solving. Guide people in a reflection on the lighter side of their stressful situations or challenges.
 - Think about your personal reasons for coming today, including events or situations which may have stimulated you to come as well as motivations like hopes and dreams for change.
 - Now try to find some humor in your situation. If you were to portray your situation or motivations in a cartoon, how would you do it?
3. Distribute paper and colored markers and explain that participants will get acquainted by creating personal cartoons, which they will share with other group members. Encourage everyone to relax and have fun making something up
 - Write your first name in the upper right-hand corner of your paper.
 - Now create a cartoon depicting your current situation, your feelings about being here, or your hopes and dreams for change.

- Your cartoon could be a dialogue or soliloquy.
 - Feel free to draw in props or symbols as well as words.
 - You have five minutes to create your own comic strip. Have fun with it.
4. When five minutes are up, divide large groups into groups of six, and when everyone is settled, give directions for introductions.
 - Introduce yourself to the group, using your cartoons.
 - Each person has two minutes to shareAnnounce the time every two minutes.
 5. When small-group sharing is done, ask participants if they would be willing to hang their cartoons in a gallery so others can read them during breaks. Provide masking tape and have people hang their cartoons in the designated space. Allow extra time for reading cartoons during breaks.

Variations

- Cartoon Captions would make an excellent closing exercise. Ask participants to write a dialogue summarizing the course or group experience. They should include their hopes at the beginning, key learnings, and plans for action.
- This exercise is easily adapted for other educational or therapeutic group purposes. For example, in parenting classes, have parents first draw a cartoon of a typical problem of communication between themselves and their child. Then, as a closing exercise, have them draw a cartoon applying their newly learned parenting skills to this same situation.