

Kat's Bag of Remote Games, Energisers and Warm-ups!

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Rules of engagement

When running any warm ups, games or energisers it's really important to think about how you introduce them. Especially for people who aren't used to them, are introverted or if the culture is very hierarchical and some people are worried about looking silly in front of others.

For some people, their experience of workshops are that they **have** to show up, it's going to be competitive, they have to say the best things and have the best ideas and they're going to fail at this because there'll be people there that are better than them. But that is why we do energisers and games, they are equalising. Everyone looks stupid.

Remember, people need

- Encouragement
- Permission
- Approval

Be as overly positive and supportive as you can! In a game there are no bad ideas, no right or wrong, we're all human. Everyone is a genius, a poet and an artist!

Remote vs IRL

When we're working remotely it becomes much harder to build rapport with participants as we are missing the non-verbal cues which come with being in a room together. This means we have to make certain things explicit that were once implicit. It means you may need to do far more energisers and quick physical warm ups throughout the workshop than before as many people will be sitting down and can very quickly lose energy, concentration and motivation.

Explain this to the room. Level with them. Ask them kindly to work with you. To agree to try things which they may not normally do. It may seem forced at first and will require a slightly different facilitation style to encourage everyone to participate but remember to always be positive, respectful and considerate of where people are. You may need to turn up your enthusiasm a few notches too.

Look after yourself first and play some of these energisers and warm ups alone or in your team before starting the workshop so you can be fully present with a high level of resourcefulness, energy and engagement. If you're not enthusiastic and excited, no one else will be!

Language

Always use "We" (even if you're not taking part in the game)

When asking people to stand up or move around you can say:

"Please stand if you're willing... but I highly recommend it"

(Giving people the option to opt out makes them far more willing to participate, as they feel it is a choice not a command)

"I invite you to...." (always invite never tell or force)

When working in pairs:

"Do we all agree to allow the other person room to fail? Yes. Great"

"Don't worry about getting this wrong and if it's a bit clumsy I'm sure the other person will forgive you"

Be conscious of all physical ability and health levels

In a room together you can easily see someone who is physically less able. Ensure you are conscious of this and invite people to message you privately if they have limitations. Make every physical movement exercise optional (and give alternatives where possible).

Sign language

Hand signals for communication and decision making on video calls

- Sparkling fingers
“I agree” sparkle up,
“neutral” sparkle in the middle,
“Disagree” sparkle down
- One finger up “I’ve got something to say”
- Two fingers up “direct response”
- X arms “I directly oppose what’s just been said”
- P finger “I’ve got a proposal”
- C fingers “I’ve got a clarification question”
- Thumbs up/down “asked a direct question like ‘can you hear me?’”

Silence

Don’t be afraid of “awkward” silences in a remote workshop!

Silence in a digital space empathises a sense of togetherness. As a facilitator leaving silence may also encourage those to speak who haven’t done so.

End Chat & Check-outs

Always try to end with a positive chat, celebrating what people enjoyed and trying to minimise people’s inner critics.

Repeat your check-in questions or do a shorter version to check-out. This will give you a good temperature check for the next workshop, and give people an opportunity to say anything which they haven’t been able to.

Check-ins

Don't doubt the quiet power of a check-in! These are especially useful for remote workshops where you're less able to "read the room". They build trust, engage everyone in the room and create a sense of human connection across this digital space.

Managing time is crucial for running effective meetings. As the session leader or facilitator, you can introduce different constraints to a check-in to allow for more or less time. Examples are:

- "In one word..."
- "In two words..."
- "In one sentence..."
- "Think of three things..."
- "Taking as much time as you need..."

Always go first to set the standard.

Crafting the check-in question is important. You want to think about:

- How much time do you have for the check-in? Think about how BIG your question is – does it invite a longer, heart-felt story from each person, or only a sentence or two?
- How can the check-in connect and support the rest of the agenda and the overall purpose of the meeting?
- What kind of tone do you want to create through the check-in? Playful? Serious? Connecting? Learning something new about each other?
- Is this a group that is very familiar with check-ins? Maybe it is time to mix things up!

Verbal Check-ins

Depending on how much time you have these can be one word check-ins or story based personal check-ins

Remember:

- Ask people to share only what they're comfortable with.
- Thank each person after they check-in.

Ideas for questions:

Focused

- What's one thing I hope to get accomplished at today's meeting?
- What will you contribute to make our session a success?

General

- What do I need to share to be present in this session?
- What am I excited or worried about related to today's session?

Early in a project/workshop/session

- What am I bringing to this group?
- How do I feel working in this group?

During a project/workshop/session

- What's happened since we last met?
- What is your personal weather status (cloudy, foggy, sunny breaks etc)?

More fun:

- What animal represents my mood today?
- What is my superhero power pose?
- What is a recent success you've experienced?

End of a project/workshop/session

- What's my biggest learning or insight from today?
- What do I choose to do differently next time?
- What has been my highest high and lowest low from this project/workshop/session?
- What's my #1 takeaway from today?

For other ideas see: <https://toolbox.hyperisland.com/check-in-questions>

Emoji Check-ins

Ask everyone to share an emoji (or several) in the chat to describe how they're feeling or in relation to a specific check-in question,

Numerical Check-Ins

On a scale of 1-10 how are you feeling today?

This could be 1-10 on a scale of energy levels, emotions, presence, availability.

Physical Check-in

Also known as “Hands up” this can be played as a warm-up or game

Invite everyone to put their hands up if....

Then name something they might have done that morning/recently.

Examples:

Hand up if you had yogurt for breakfast

Hands up if you've been outside today

Hand up if you slept well

Hands up if you've watched the news

Then...

Hands up if you haven't put your hands up yet? Invite this person to call out and choose the next question.

You can also make the call out relevant to the workshop or as a temperature check for the room.

Examples:

Hands up if you're excited for today

Hands up if you did the pre-work

Hands up if you have lots of ideas

OR you can make this a VERY QUICK numerical check-in and do it throughout the workshop to gauge energy levels

Hands up if you're a:

8-10

6-8

4-6

2-4

1-2??

Written Check-ins

Sometimes it's useful to allow people to write their check-ins down. This could be for time reasons, or for personal preference. Many people prefer to write than to speak out loud in a group, and can be more open with their feelings this way. There is also a possibility to make it anonymous if that's useful!

Here's a template you can use (many thanks to Ellie Osborne & Enrol Yourself)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LMrmoEckY_9IHZB_0Dw3deLrbClgDUz28zT-n1vuPDw/edit?usp=sharing

Example:

London allhands

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W64W9b0tTLzbYChglCXkQEGAZUp3xd-hFWdyJU_j-S8/edit?usp=sharing

"Name

How are you feeling?

What are you most looking forward to this Easter weekend?

What one thing are you going to do for yourself this weekend?"

Warm-ups

Share & Stretch

Participants introduce something about themselves and share a stretch. Everyone else on the call copies the stretch as the person is talking.

Say the following:

What I want each person to do as we go around the group is to say your name, introduce a stretch that anyone can do and while stretching tell the group something about yourself. I'd like to invite the rest of the group to copy their stretch if you're able.

Note: This is an excellent exercise for building rapport with the group.

As the facilitator, start with a good stretch and a story about yourself that will help get the group aware of ideas of what to share. If you share about your favorite cereal, the rest of the group will probably follow suit.

Point and Yes

Outcome: Expand people's vision, build opportunity for creativity, encourage positivity, be a bit silly.

Ask people to look around the room, point at something and say "YES!"

Just look around, notice that there is more around you than this computer screen. Notice everything, point and say "Yes!"

Find something else, really look at it, say "Yes!" and something else "Yes!", try a silly voice, "YEeeeEsssS!" get excited at some things, "YES!!!!" get annoyed at others, "yesh".

Say “Yes!” to everything.

I’m so glad you’re here

Use this if there is a Brady bunch grid of faces of a Zoom call or Hangout. Begin the session by asking everyone to say to one another “I’m so glad you’re here”

Ask them to point up and down and left and right as they say it. On screen it will look as if they are pointing to one another, then ask them to say it to the whole group “I’m so glad you’re here”

Things I see in you

Outcome: This is a great way to allow people to bring as much of themselves as possible to the group, as they would like to be. It gives them permission to afford one another the highest of humanity. Bestowing their greatest wishes for themselves on one another.

Split into pairs and think of 4 things you want for yourself, four characteristics. Then look at the other person and see those things in them. Say the four things you'd like to have for yourself.

For example:

I see intelligence in you.

I see creativity in you.

I see warmth and compassion in you.

I see resourcefulness and a bit of daring.

Swap places.

Tongue twisters

This is a great warm-up to do before you go into a workshop to prepare your voice as a facilitator. No one wants to hear someone speak for an hour in the same monotonous tone! Especially on video.

Tips:

- As you say the tongue twisters, vary the intonation – i.e. the pitch - as much as you can – high, low, all over the place. The flexibility, stamina and musicality of your voice will steadily improve.
- It's a good challenge to do each tongue twister until you can say it 3 times with no mistakes

*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.
Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled pepper?
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper,
Where's the peck of pickled pepper Peter Piper picked?*

She stood upon the balcony inexplicably mimicking him hiccupping and amicably welcoming him in.

*Denise sees the fleece,
Denise sees the fleas.
At least Denise could sneeze
and feed and freeze the fleas.*

*One-one was a race horse.
Two-two was one too.
One-one won one race.
Two-two won one too.*

*Mrs Puggy Wuggy has a square cut punt.
Not a punt cut square,
Just a square cut punt.
It's round in the stern and blunt in the front.
Mrs Puggy Wuggy has a square cut punt.*

*She sells sea shells by the sea shore.
If she sells sea shells by the sea shore,
Then where are the sea shells she sells?*

Unique New York, New York unique.

Red leather, yellow leather, red leather, yellow leather.

Freddy Thrush flies through thick fog.

Has the wristwatch strap shop shut? (say/ask it in three different ways)

Hands up

Invite everyone to put their hands up if.... Then name something they might have done that morning/recently.

You can also make the call out relevant to the workshop

Examples:

Hand up if you had yogurt for breakfast

Hands up if you've been outside today

Hand up if you slept well

Hands up if you've watched the news

Hands up if you

Team Tour

1. Each person has 1 minute to give a tour of the place where they're currently located using their webcam.
2. Describe where you are (coworking space, office, home, outdoors), who else is there and what it's like to work there.
3. Let other participants ask you questions.

Show and Tell

Facilitator: Ask participants to take a photo of their current workspace before the video call and upload it to their computer for easy access later. Then, create a Miro board of the photos have it ready to share during the session.

1. Ask everyone to upload a photo of their current workspace in a miro board —don't add people's names next to their workspace yet!
2. Take turns guessing which workspace belongs to who and why.

Alternative: Take photos of your shoes, meal, or personal object and let others guess who it belongs to

Shape Up

Facilitator/Host:

Before you start, select 'gallery mode' for your video conference tool so you can view everyone's thumbnails in a grid format (all thumbnails should be the same size).

1. Call out a shape (for example: triangle, heart, square, the letter "A", tree, house, ...)
2. Ask people to move their arms and hands up/down or left/right to recreate the shape in the gallery mode you're viewing.
3. When the team has managed to make the shape, ask them to hold it so you can take a screenshot. (everyone's gallery is different but it is the hosts gallery view that they need to make the shape in)
4. Share it with with the team and try to do another shape, progressively making them more complicated.

Energisers

Shoulder roll and shake it out

You should invite participants to move every 10 minutes. Introduce them to a very quick and easy shoulder roll exercise which you can do together.

Bring the shoulders up to the ears, and then let them go.

Roll them forwards a few times.

Roll them back.

LEt your hands go loose and shake your arms out.

Move your head in a way that feels comfortable, taking the right ear to the right shoulder and the left ear to the left shoulder.

Bonus point if you can encourage them to make a noise with the movement, whatever feels good to them. This releases tension in the face.

Mustard Magic Dance breaks

Moving synchronously as group has many benefits and is proven to improve relational wellbeing, empathetic interaction and connection between groups. Also IT'S FUN!

One person chooses a song and sends a link to the group (either youtube or Spotify if everyone has it). Everyone mutes themselves and you count down from 3 playing the song at the same time. Dancing together!

Energy magic

Thumping

Find your collarbone with your fingers, and move your fingers towards the middle. Find the end. The end of the collarbone is sometimes a bit knobby. Then you come out and down on a little diagonal from that and you'll have a little dip.

(Most people can find a dip. But if not then tell them it's ok, so it's not that important that you find it and say this might hurt a little. Please don't do it if you don't want to)

Once you've found the dip you either give that a lovely massage, or you put your fingers together, and you thump it.

Note: If you want the science behind it, this point is the K 27, which is 27th point on the kidney meridian that starts from the base of the foot and goes up the body. And when we're tired, the meridians start running backwards. If you believe this stuff, and we want to sit down we want to go to sleep. So this exercise starts the energy running forward again.

Tarzan

(This one is good for the immune system)

Find your sternum.

(Anyone with a necklace? Tell them to put the necklace around the back.)

Put your fists together. And then you beat your chest like Tarzan!

Let yourself make a noise.

People can leave their sound on or turn it off and make a big noise together.

Synchronous breathing

Synchronous activity (singing, dancing, clapping and breathing together in synch) has been proven to improve relational wellbeing, connection and presence.

Invite people to sit with their feet grounded on the floor, relax their shoulders, breathe in deeply for 4, out for 4, in for 4, out for 4. Together.

Self-hug

If they are physically able invite participants to put their arms out long, cross them over their body and give themselves a big hug!

Ripe Bananas

A Peta Lily classic physical clown warm up.

Stand up. Feel your feet in the ground, do a quick body scan and feel how balanced your body is.

Now, imagine you have lots of very ripe bananas underneath your right foot. Starting with the ball of your foot and toes squish your foot into the bananas, roll down your foot and put your weight in your heel squishing then and kneading them like dough. Put your whole body into it and you roll your foot and squish them, giving yourself a little massage.

Now stand up tall with both feet on the floor and feel how your balance has changed.

Repeat on your left foot.

Stand up again and do a body scan. Do your feet feel heavier or lighter?

Games

Eye-Spy

The classic game...but on video!

Everyone takes turns “spying” something in people backgrounds.(Ensure everyone’s background is visible, taking off any background filters/images etc)

I spy something beginning with....B!

Then others guess what it is until they get it right!

Eg. a bike, a bag, a bottle etc.

Story of your name

Spend 30 seconds - 1 minutes sharing the “story of your name” - we all have one! Why were you named that? Where does your family name come from, do you know why your parents chose your first name?

NOTE: Go first as the facilitator to set the time and tone

1 Minute Life Stories

In pairs. One person says their life story in one minute. The other person listens and doesn't interrupt. At the end of the minute the listener repeats back as much as they remember.

Used to get to know each other and also show active listening.

Mind Meld

This is a simple game where you say a word at the same time as someone else. Then all the players have to do is try and find a word in the middle of those two words, that encompasses both and say it at the same time as another player. Mind Meld

When a mind meld occurs you sing the Mind Meld song and do the Mind Meld dance.

It was a mind meld

It was a mind meld

It happens all the time

It was a mind meld"

Story Swap

Good for verbal "Yes And".

One person tells a story. When the facilitator claps their hands, shouts out someone's name and then and shouts swap! The other person takes over telling the story exactly where they left off.

Keeps everyone on their toes and practicing active listening.

Shared Holiday

Talking about a shared holiday in pairs and starting every new sentence with 'Yes And'. This really gets the players on the same page in a fun and inventive low-pressure way. It's also a fun bonding exercise.

Word at a Time Stories

Split into pairs.

Invite them to tell a story a word at a time, with a different person saying each word.

As a variation anyone can shout “Again” whenever they want to re-start with a new story, which stops people getting stuck and keeps them in the flow of it.

8 Things

Someone volunteers.

They are given a category of things to say 8 of.

They say 8 things in that category as quickly as they can, with everyone shouting encouragement for each one and a round of applause at the end.

It’s important that everyone enthusiastically supports every suggestion, this helps the group trust each other that ever offer will be supported. They are encouraged to say the first things that come to them, the game isn’t called 8 Right Things afterall!

For instance:

8 things you can’t order online!

1. A cow
2. Your nan
3. Sweden
4. Volcanos
5. Toilet Roll
6. Sherbert
7. Mice
8. Voldermort

Touch Blue

1. Pick a physical or visual attribute of an object and says it aloud (for example: "Touch something metal!")
2. Everyone else on the video call has to find something with that attribute and touch it (this usually leads to people stretching out or jump out of their seat to touch something that matches the description).
3. Whoever is last to touch an object chooses the next attribute to touch.

Name That Sound

Ask everyone to turn their webcams off.

Message someone privately and ask them to imitate a sound (for example: an old dial-up modem, the sound of a printer, Christopher Walken, a Star Wars lightsaber, ocean waves, a sports announcer, etc).

Have the others guess what sound they're imitating.

Virtual Charades

Pair each participant with someone else.

Ask each person to choose a title of a book, movie, TV show or song that their partner will have to imitate in front of the webcam to the rest of the group.

Tell participants to send the title they chose in a direct message to their partner.

In pairs, take turns acting out what your partner sent you. The rest of the group has 1 minute to guess what you're mimicking.

Alternative:

Split pairs into breakout rooms. Together they will choose a song to act out for the rest of the group. One person will act out the artist, the other will act out the song title.

Depending on the time, you can randomly pick one pair when they come back to the room or ask every pair to perform their charade.

Spin a Tale

Good for introverts or those less willing to speak out

1. Assign numbers to each participant, starting with n°1.
2. Ask person n°1 to start telling a story in a direct message to person n°2 (maximum two lines).
3. Once they receive the message, person n°2 continues the story in another direct message to person n°3 (without including the first part), and so on...
4. In the end, everyone needs to read out the story in the order you started.

Clap together

Put people in pairs and ask general questions. People clap when the question is applicable to them. And if their partner claps.

Clap if...

You're a man

If you're a Leo

If you like Queen

If you have a pet

Miro Based

Animal Speed

Facilitator: Create a Miro board for this one

1. Ask someone to pick an animal.
2. Give everyone 1 minute to draw that animal on a sticky note.
3. Compare your drawings and let the person who picked the animal judge which animal is the best drawn.
4. Do another round and reduce the drawing time to 20 seconds and then down to 10 seconds. Let the person who chose the animal judge the best drawing.

Alternative: Use dots to let participants anonymously vote for the best drawing.

Two Truths, One Lie

1. Ask everyone to think about three statements about themselves: two of them must be true, and one should be false.
2. Make each person add their statements on sticky notes in a miro board.
3. Let others guess which statements are true and which one is false.

Alternative: Ask participants to share a dream they wish was true, and phrase it as if it was a truth. Then participants will have to guess which statement is a wish and which ones are truths.

If you were an animal...

1. Send a direct message in your chat tool to assign a participant's name to each person on the video call.
2. Ask the following question: "If the person you've been assigned were an animal, what would they be?"
3. Let everyone add an image of the person's animal on miro and add sticky notes describing that animal's characteristics that represents the person.
4. Once everyone is ready, let the team try to guess who each animal is meant to represent.

Alternative: Try the same exercise using car models, food, drinks, etc

Genie in a Bottle

1. Ask the following question: "If you had three wishes, what would they be?" (choose either personal or professional wishes)

2. Let everyone add three images representing their wishes and take turns discussing your wishes.