



# ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

## 1. BACKWARD BRAINSTORMING

Design a vignette that presents a problem in detail and then indicates that it has been resolved. After reading the scenario to the group, participants individually write their ideas about what happened to resolve the problem. After four minutes of writing, round robin brainstorm their responses and record them on chart paper. This is a good way to energize the group and learn what they know about a topic.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. BUZZ GROUPS

Small groups of 3-5 people assemble to discuss, decide, or answer questions, topics or problems, presented verbally or in writing. Buzz groups can be charged with completing statements, generating or prioritizing lists, completing a quiz, solving a problem, responding to a case study, etc. They might then convene with the larger group to report, compare results, and articulate what can be learned from the exercise.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 3. CAROUSEL BRAINSTORM

This strategy gives a physical energy boost to the session. Place large pieces of chart paper, each with a different question or topic related to the subject, at each table or small group. Give each small group a different colored marker. Have each group choose a recorder. Then have the teams brainstorm responses to the question or topic listed on their sheet of paper as the recorder records. After 4-5 minutes, have the teams rotate their sheets of paper to the next table. At each rotation, groups read over what has already been suggested and add ideas of their own. You may continue to rotations until each group has contributed to every chart or you may choose to limit the activity to 3 or 4 rotations. Teams then receive their original charts for review. Post the charts and have a gallery walk so everyone can see the good ideas and take notes if they wish.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **4. COMICS/CARTOONS**

Comics and cartoons, when selected and used well, can be a great way to illustrate key points, help learners relate to a theme, and rejuvenate a group through the use of humor. Keep a file of cartoons categorized by topic.

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#### **5. DOTS ON KEY POINTS**

Provide a sheet of small self-adhesive dots on each table. After you have lectured 10-15 minutes, pause and ask participants to review their notes and place dots of the key points. Then have them turn to a neighbor and share their work. An alternative is to provide highlighting pens instead of dots.

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Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **6. FLIP CHART FILL UP**

This is a fun way to energize the group. A flip chart and markers are placed on each table. Groups are challenged to fill the flip chart with words and/or pictures related to an assigned topic. Suggestions might be: create a group resume; draw a picture illustrating a key concept or theory; create a definition; draw a poster; write a poem; create a graffiti board, etc.

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#### **7. FISHBOWL**

Ask a portion the group to form an inner circle and have the remaining participants form a listening circle around them. The inner circle discusses the question or topic or does a role play. The outside circle participants act as observers. The leader identifies the roles for each group. An observation checklist can be used to focus the observers to look for specific things. The observers provide feedback. Roles can be reversed so everyone has the opportunity to be a participant and observer. As a variation of concentric circles, you can have participants remain seated at a table and have different tables be the observers.

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## 8. GUIDED CONVERSATION

This is a way to examine attitudes, values and beliefs. Divide participants into dyads. Request that conversations be kept confidential between the partners. Give each person a guided conversation sheet that contains a sequence of thought questions related to their experiences with a topic. Ask partners to each address each question in turn before moving on to the next. It is helpful to have them cover the unanswered questions so they do not look ahead and can listen carefully to each other. Process the conversations by asking for personal insights and experiences that arose from the conversation.

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## 9. GUIDED IMAGERY

People are encouraged to relax and given verbal prompts from the facilitator. See sample script on *Guided Imagery* in this section.

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## 10. GROUPING

a) Form groups on the basis of the last letter of the participant's first name. Then divide into smaller groups by going to the second to the last letter until the groups are the appropriate size.

b) Predetermine groups based on criteria you determine and code their nametags with three different colored dots or symbols. This technique will allow the possibility of all participants having the opportunity to work in three different groups for successive tasks.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 11. HOW MANY

Ask a series of "How many of you have ever ..." questions during your presentation. This technique spotlights the background of the audience and connects them to the information being taught. The process creates personal meaning for the participants.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 12. HUMAN SCAVENGER HUNT

Divide participants into groups of 6 people. Have each group stand or sit together. Facilitator reads one of the descriptions (uncover one at a time on chart or OH). Each group talks and finds the members in their group that fits the description and quickly send those people up to collect a ticket or award the group a point. Add up the tickets or points at the end and award prizes (popcorn, candy kisses, etc.)

1. A person in your group who lives the closest to here.
2. Two people with the same middle name
3. Two people who have the same first and last initial
4. A group of three people with different colored eyes.
5. A group of people who can spell a word by putting together the first letters of their first names.
6. Two people with the same birthday or birthday month.
7. The person in your group who was born the farthest away from here.
8. A group of people whose ages add up to 100.
9. A group of people who have attended school for a total of 43 years.
10. A group of people whose shoe sizes add up to 40.

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## 13. INTERVIEW YOUR NEIGHBOR

Ask participants in pairs to interview each other for three minutes, making notes of key points they may wish to report back in summary of the interview. Then do a round robin asking everyone to introduce their neighbor to the rest of the group. Small groups can report back to the whole group, larger groups can report only to a group of six.

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## 14. IT'S A TOSS UP

Use this activity as a meeting starter or for participants to give short comments about a topic. Participants throw a ball, beanbag or other object " to someone in the group. When that person is finished, he/she throws the ball to someone else to speak. This can be used when a facilitator wants everyone to have a chance to express ideas or opinions. Rules are: Only the person with the ball can talk; no interruptions, corrections or helping; suspend judgement.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 15. JIGSAW

Each participant in a team is assigned a different piece of material on which to become an expert. Participants meet with members from other teams who are assigned the same topic and discuss how to effectively teach the topic to their teams. They then return to their teams and each person in turn teaches their material to their team. Each person is responsible for learning all parts through this method.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 16. MIND MAPS

This is also known as webbing and is used to activate prior knowledge and /or review content. Have participants put a key word in the center of a clean piece of paper. Then ask them to place related words around the key word. Ask them to organize their web as they develop it.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 17. MINUTE PAPERS

At the end of a section of material, ask participants to free write for two to three minutes. Questions such as, "What were the most important points from this section of the workshop?" or "What questions do you still have about the material?" give you important feedback about participant learning

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## 18. MY POINT OF VIEW

Open-ended sentence stems immediately involve the participant. Examples are: My name is...; What I want to get out of this workshop is ...; My strengths in counseling others are ... They can be used at any point in a presentation and are especially effective as a starting activity. Directions:

1. Both persons should read the open-ended question/s.
2. Take turns answering, allowing as much time as each person needs.
3. The partner listening may ask questions, clarify answers, etc.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 19. NOTE-TAKING HANDOUTS

Provide a handout that contains a skeleton outline or the key points to be covered in the presentation. Leave plenty of space under each point for participants to fill in explanatory notes and examples from the presentation. You may also include thought questions with space to provide a handout with fill-in-the blank spaces. As you lecture and fill in blanks on a corresponding overhead transparency, they complete their handout.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 20. NUMBERED HEADS TOGETHER

This is an effective review and summarization strategy. The trainer asks a question to small equal sized groups of participants. Participants put their heads together to make sure they all know the answer. The trainer calls a number, and the participant in each group who has that number writes his/her response on a piece of paper and shows it to the trainer. All teams with the correct response earn a point. Keep score as you go and offer prizes to the team with the highest point total.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 21. PAIRED VERBAL FLUENCY

This strategy can be used to activate thinking about a topic or provide an opportunity for review at any point in the presentation. The steps are as follows: 1) Establish partners. Have each dyad decide who will be partner #1 and partner #2. 2) Assign the topic each partner will discuss in turn. Partners listen carefully to each other. During their turn they try not to repeat anything said by the other person. 3) When you say "Go" partner #1 begins. After the designated amount of time elapses, you say "switch" and partner #2 takes over. Three to four rounds are usually sufficient. The time for each partner should not exceed one minute. Decreasing the time for each partner should not exceed one minute. Decreasing the time for each round keeps the energy high.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 22. POP UP

To introduce a section of material and learn what participants already know, invite them to "pop up" out of their seats one by one and state something they know or believe to be true about the topic. For instance, ask them what they know or believe about adult learners. It's a good idea to allow a minute of wait time after giving the question and before asking for responses.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I could use this technique in my behavior workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 23. QUESTIONS AND WAIT TIME

This simple entails interspersing your lecture with carefully considered questions. After asking the group a question, wait a minute before asking for responses. This allows everyone to consider their answers and results in increased participation and better responses!

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 24. ROUNDTABLE BRAINSTORMING

Divide participants into small groups of 6-8. Give each participant an envelope with a sentence stem written at the top. The topic of the stem is related to the training topic. For example, "A problem I am having with family involvement is..." Participants complete the sentence with a clear explanation of a problem they are experiencing. They then pass their envelopes to the left. Each person now reads the problem/s he has received and writes a possible solution on a 3x5 card. She/he puts the card into the envelope and passes the envelope to the left again. Continue passing envelopes and generating new solutions until envelopes return to their originators. Everyone can now read the solutions they were given. End the activity by having each participants share with his/her small group the solutions(s) she/he will try.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 25. STORYTELLING

Concrete experiences related to the training topic are shared. These stories help provide a personal connection to the material and help learners clarify their experience, interest and stake in the topic. Stories can inspire, instruct, and entertain. Stories can be told by the trainer, learners or others through written materials.

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 26. TALK WALK

Give participants a problem to solve or a question to ponder. Divide them into partners and invite them to take a walk for 15-20 minutes as they discuss the assignment. When they return give them a few minutes to write the highlights of their conversations in their journals or notebooks. You may even ask the entire group to share some of the key ideas shared. For instance, you may assign them to discuss what they are going to do as a result of the workshop; or share ideas about how they involve parents in their programs, etc.

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## 27. THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Pose a question that requires analysis, evaluation or synthesis. Participants think and write possible responses for a minute or two. Each person then discusses his/her ideas with a partner. You may wish to have them share key ideas with the entire group.

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## 28. THREE-STEP INTERVIEW

Participants learn each other's opinions and ideas on a topic given by the trainer. They interview each other in pairs. Then each person tells the small group what he/she learned from his/her partner.

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## 29. TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOR AND...

The trainer gives this instruction and follows with, "identify the key points from the last few minutes" or "discuss what I just said" or "generate practical examples for the point I just made" or "share a time when you've encountered examples of these ideas" or "decide which of the options I listed is the best and why".

Demonstrated in the PENT Summit in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 30. WAKE UP

When participants are getting tired, have them move their chair, stand up, or give themselves or a partner a shoulder/neck rub. Lead the whole group in some simple stretches. Tell the group to take a walk and be back ready to continue in 5 minutes.

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### 31. WALK AROUND SURVEY

This is an effective activity for multi-day workshops. It is best done at the beginning of the day to provide a bridge to previous learning. Have participants divide a paper into six equal sections. Each of the six slots in the grid has a place for a name and an idea. Signal the group to get up and move around the room collecting ideas, insights or recalled pieces of information from six different people. As they do so, each person should write his/her name and idea in a slot on the recording form. At the end of the allotted time, have everyone return to their home groups to compare notes.

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### 32. WRITE TO LEARN

Learners are given a provocative theme/question/problem or task and asked to write their thoughts. A variation is to have learners pair off and dialogue with a partner throughout the session. Pairs divide a piece of paper vertically in half. One person starts by writing something about the discussion topic on one side of the page. The partner responds on the other side. The written discussion continues throughout the session.

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### 33. 3-2-1

This is a summarization strategy that can be used with individuals or small groups. On a chart or overhead transparency, the presenter vertically lists 3-2-1 stems for participants to expand on. The stems are flexible and can be tailored to each presentation. For example, 3 ideas I will use, 2 points to ponder, 1 action I will take immediately.

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