

Life Events

This exercise uses the participants' drawings of themselves to help them become better acquainted with one another. This structured experience is most appropriate for educational programs or sessions that emphasize personal interaction among group members. This icebreaker is effective at any time during the learning program.

Time Reference

Approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Group Size

Unlimited, but best suited for a group of 10 to 20 participants.

Space Required

A room that contains adequate writing space for all of the participants. The area must be large enough to permit the unrestricted movement of the learners.

Materials Needed

For each participant, a large sheet of newsprint and three crayons or colored markers.

1. The trainer begins by explaining that the group members will be taking part in an exercise that is designed to help them become better acquainted with their fellow participants.
2. After instructing the group members to seat themselves at tables, the trainer gives each participant a sheet of newsprint and three crayons or colored markers.
3. Holding up a sheet of newsprint, the trainer demonstrates how the participants are to fold the paper in half and then in half again so that the paper is divided into four boxes. Next the participants fold their papers, unfold them, and outline the fold marks in crayon or marker.
4. The trainer then asks each participant to write the following headings at the top of the boxes: Childhood (top left box), Teenage Years (top right box), Adult Life (bottom left box), and Future (bottom right box) (see Diagram of Life Events Boxes).
5. The group leader explains that in each of the Childhood, Teenage Years, and Adult Life boxes, the participants are each to draw a simple picture that outlines an event or action that was extremely important to that particular stage of their life. In the Future box, they are each to draw a picture of an event or action that they hope will change or add to their life.
6. The group members then are given 15 minutes in which to complete their drawings.
7. When the allotted time has elapsed, the trainer asks the participants to divide into groups of four or five and to share their life events with one another.

Diagram of Life Events Boxes

Childhood	Teenage Years
Adult Life	Future

Variations

- The trainer may use different headings in the four boxes. For example: My Life Ten Years Ago, My Life Five Years Ago, My Life Now, and My Life in the Future.
- The group leader may request that the participants write about, instead of draw, an event for each box.
- If the group contains fewer than 12 participants, the trainer may request that the group members share their life events with the entire group.
- Using the headings presented in step #4 of the Trainer Administration section, the group leader may direct the participants to depict in the first three boxes the most exciting or amusing event that occurred during each time period. The fourth box, Future, is to contain their secret or fantasy ambition.