SESSION SIX OUTLINE
PROFESSIONALISM

Icebreakers:
Suggest time: 15 minutes each
5 Pointed Star
The Snap Debate

The following icebreakers were designed in order to encourage team building (an over arching theme from the needs assessment, which was indicated to be used by all Carolina student leaders) and allow the students leader to begin examining what life balance is. Please feel free to use one or both icebreakers in order to best suit the needs of your student organization.

5 Pointed Star

Suggested time

These icebreakers should last between 15-20 minutes each.

5 Pointed Star

Materials

Long (20 – 50 ft) Rope Blindfolds

Set Up

Lay the rope on the ground in the shape of a circle

Directions

The 5 Pointed Star begins with participants gathering around a rope on the ground in the shape of a circle. Participants are instructed to pick up the rope with both hands and then shape the rope into a 5 pointed star, with all the overlaps and criss-crosses (just like the kind you drew in elementary school). The team must take 4 minutes to come up with a plan and while they are talking they cannot start moving. It sounds easy enough, but inevitably some eager person starts taking action during planning time - that is when the penalties start flying: blindfolds, ankles tied together, walk backwards everywhere you go, etc. Then the team must implement their plan (move) without talking, then plan again, then move again. Once they have moved through the four sequences and formed the best star possible they lay the rope on the ground and examine their handiwork. This activity is a great example of how communication can suffer when stress enters into a situation. It is important to remain professional no matter what the circumstances are and always remember and maintain the goal of the team/organization.
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The Snap Debate

Objectives

Get group thinking about different sides of an issue. Helps with decision making or understanding complex problems.

Directions

Divide the group in half, and have them line up facing each other with the facilitator at the head of the line. Introduce the activity, and clarify, that they are going to take turns arguing both sides of an issue. One person speaks at a time, and the facilitator will call on people back and forth to keep the debate moving forward. Don't be shy about calling on someone who doesn't have their hand raised, and make sure to not let a few people dominate the debate. Also make sure to explain that regardless of how each person personally feels about the issue up for debate, for the next 20 minutes, they are to assume the role of one side, then they will have to switch and argue the other side with their best persuasive arguments.

Assign one group to one side of the issue (this will be the "pro" side - who will argue in favor) and asking the other group the other side of the issue (the "con" side - who will argue in opposition). After about 10 min (or just when they seem to be getting really entrenched in their sides) stop the debate and say "Switch!" and now they each have to take the opposite side of the issue and build on the arguments already made.

Examples of good snap debate questions:

- we should have a policy at our (school/work/camp) prohibiting x
- no one should be allowed to x
- X is not our responsibility
- As a team we are more like Encyclopedia Britannica than Wikipedia

Alternatives

Award arbitrary points like on 'Whose Line is it Anyway?' - the show where everything's made up and the points don't matter.

This is a great activity to allow students to put together everything they understand about maintaining a professional manner at all points—even when under pressure. You can easily analyze the entire process at the end and discuss who exhibited what aspects well.
Purpose: This lesson is to help students begin to understand the purpose of professionalism in their own lives. Their goal is to help them to identify professionalism, and how to effectively incorporate it in their own lives.

Facilitator Instructions:
Use the following script to engage the students in the material. Then break the students into teams of four and have them review the short story worksheet. After finishing, encourage them to answer the provided questions in small groups before facilitating a class discussion with all groups.

[Facilitator Script]
It’s important for team to discover and learn together so they can grow together as they learn to work more effectively with team members.

Professionalism comes down to the many choices that people make daily.

From the time we get up in the morning we choose the clothes we wear; women choose the way in which they apply their makeup and men make a choice of ties, facial hair, etc.

We all choose the cleanliness of our automobile or the organization we display in our workspace.

Professionalism is determined based on how others perceive you. It’s not about how much you spend on a suit, but the fact that your suit is nicely pressed and stain-free.

It’s not about the kind of car you drive, it’s about the pride and care you take in keeping it clean.
Professionalism comes down to EFFORT.

Everyone has experienced days where they have a difficult time of not allowing one’s personal issues work their way into their professional environment.

As the leader, it is your job to understand first and foremost that this is a common issue that you will definitely need to address one way or the other.

The key here is to address the issue before it actually happens by setting clear expectations for your workplace.

[Facilitator then passes out the following worksheet to the groups of 4. Have them read over the story and then answer the following questions. After giving them a few minutes, lead the class in a group discussion. There are no right answers, just different perspectives. Make a list of all traits that the organization thinks “professional” leaders should exhibit in their org. Type and print out this list for the next meeting.]
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What is Professionalism?

One creative manager went so far as to purchase a large golden coat hook. He proudly stood by the shiny new coat hook as his team walked into the office on Monday morning.

Later, during his morning staff meeting, as if on cue, one of his employees asked what the golden coat hook was for.

The manager explained that he placed it there as a reminder to himself and a symbol to the team. He said, “You see, when I come into the office each morning, I’m going to mentally place all my personal issues onto this coat hook. I’m going to leave them right there securely on the coat hook knowing full well that every night before I go home, I will be able to walk over and pick up right where I left off with those issues. My goal is to ensure I never allow my personal issues to get in the way of my professional roles and responsibilities.”

He then went on to say, “and folks, let me be clear, this is my expectation for each one of you as well. As a team, we each must commit to this end because we owe it to one another to be at our best and we are each empowered to hold one another accountable for this expectation. So rest assured, when you come in each morning, leave your personal issues on the hook where they will be safe and secure. You have my word that they’ll remain right there for you to pick up each night before you leave.”

With a smile and a nod, each team member understood the analogy and realized that his request was a perfectly legitimate expectation for the workplace.

Frank Tyger once said, “Professionalism is knowing how to do it, when to do it, and doing it.”

Questions to ask yourself:

1) Do you think this is a good example of professionalism?
2) What should a peer leader in your student organization look like if someone described them as having a “strong sense of professionalism”?
3) What things can you do, and your student organization do to instill in students a sense of professionalism?