

Icebreaker Activity -Numbers Don't Lie¹

Ages

8 to 12

Led By: Adults with teen partners

Life Skills: Learning to Learn—acquiring, evaluating, and using new information.

Communication—including verbal communication and listening.

Time Needed: 20 minutes

Group Size: Any

Materials Needed:

* Flip chart and markers

* Masking tape

* Two sets of colored dots (red and blue, for example). You'll need enough dots to give every participant three of one color and three of another color.

What Do Kids Learn?

They explore the total number of people who die each year from different causes, comparing this to what they think are the correct figures as well as to what they fear the most.

Connecting to Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Use

Many times, what people believe and what is actually true are different things. Take tobacco use. Although most would acknowledge that death rates from use of tobacco are high, how many would understand that smoking is the leading cause of mortality in the United States?

Do the Activity

Step One

Explain that the group looks at how cigarettes, alcohol, and other things affect their health.

Write the following on a flip chart with markers:

Alcohol use

Flu and pneumonia

Air pollution and other toxins

Car accidents

Guns

Drug use

Hang the flip chart where it's easy to view by participants.

¹ Actual Causes of Deaths in the United States, 2000, in *the Journal of the American Medical Association* 291 (10), 2004.

Step Two

Hand out three dots (of the same color) to each person. Referring to the flip chart, ask the question:

Which of these things do you think most people die from each year?

Instruct participants to place a dot by the one they think is the leading cause of death in the United States, then the second-leading cause, then the third. They can mull about the chart and talk with others as they decide where to place their dots.

Tally the total number of dots to assemble a list of what the group thinks are the three leading causes of death in the United States each year. Write these three causes on a separate sheet of flip chart paper under the heading, “What We Think: Biggest Causes of Death in the U.S.”

Step Three

Hand out another three dots (different color than the previous set) to each person. Referring to the original flip chart, ask the question:

Which of these things do you fear the most? Which ones do you think represent the most danger to you or a loved one?

Instruct the group to put a dot by the one they fear the most for themselves or a family member, then the one they fear second most, and so on. They can mull about the chart and talk with others as they decide individually where to place their dots.

After they have finished, again tally the total number of dots to come up with a list of what the group thinks are the three causes of death they fear the most for themselves or a loved one. Write these three causes of death on a separate sheet of flip chart paper under the header, “What I Fear the Most.”

Textbox

Note: If you’re doing this activity with more than 20 participants, make a duplicate flipchart (details in Step One) to use in Step Three. This makes it easier to count the dots.

Step Four

Now write the following on a new flip chart:

Actual Biggest Causes of Death in U.S.

Alcohol use	85,000 deaths
Flu and pneumonia	75,000 deaths
Air pollution and other toxins	55,000 deaths
Car accidents	43,000 deaths
Guns	29,000 deaths
Drug use	17,000 deaths
TOBACCO	435,000 deaths

Discuss how these figures compare with what the group thought were the biggest deaths. Note that using tobacco causes MORE deaths than the other categories COMBINED (435,00 versus 314,000).

Discuss how these figures compare with everyone's worst fears.

Step Five

Explain to the group that there is a leading cause of death that has been left off the chart. Ask participants to try to figure out what it is. <Obesity and inactivity. It's estimated that it's the second leading cause of death in the United States, responsible for more than 400,000 deaths in the United States each year. This means it's more important than ever for kids to stay healthy and well!>"