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BUILDING COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGH ICE-BREAKERS AND PARTING WAYS

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Overview

Many instructors are concerned with creating a community in the classroom. Although there are numerous published “ice-breakers,” many of these techniques are not specific to psychology courses or have been used so much that the students see them as redundant and cliché. Ice-breakers are better if they have relevance to a specific class, are targeted to the appropriate group, and are varied. The best ice-breakers simply are important, relevant activities that have as an additional feature an opportunity for the group to get acquainted. In addition, we do not view ice-breakers as only necessary the first day or first week of courses, but rather we view ice-breakers as ways to continue building community and introducing new topics.

While the technique of using ice-breakers is well known, quite the opposite is the case with ending a course. For example, McKeachie (1999) suggests using ice-breakers, although he does not give specific examples, yet little is mentioned about parting ways. In addition, little research has been conducted assessing the value of providing academic and psychological closure to a course. Many faculty realize that the end of a class can often seem abrupt and anti-climactic (Eggleston & Smith, 2001). We believe parting ways are essential for establishing academic closure (e.g., reviews of the material, post-tests of knowledge) as well as emotional closure (e.g., recognition, taking time to say good-bye). The very best parting way activities combine academic relevance, emotional closure, and make connections beyond the classroom (Eggleston & Smith, 2002).

This resource provides a detailed overview of 15 effective ice-breakers and 15 useful parting ways that can be used in many psychology classes, at a variety of levels and for most class sizes. Instructions summarize the activity, provide directions, estimate the time needed for the activity, and suggest the most effective class size, variations, and any materials needed.

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Description

This resource provides instructors with some useful ice-breakers and parting ways. Not all activities are appropriate for all courses or for all instructors' teaching styles or objectives. Rather, this resource is intended to spark interest in utilizing these teaching strategies to introduce topics, wrap-up units, and to create community in the classroom. While reading our specific ideas, we hope that readers will generate their own ideas that match specific course objectives, students, and teaching styles.

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ICE-BREAKERS

Ice-breakers can be used to build community within your class and also to introduce the upcoming topical matter. We believe that using ice-breaker activities allows students to be more engaged and interested in the topic. Ice-breakers are certainly necessary in the first days of a course, but ice-breakers also can be used to build community throughout the semester and to introduce new course material.

ICE-BREAKER 1 Would You Rather...?

Summary: Would you rather questions have students compare and contrast two different options that relate to the course material.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, questions can be adapted to specific class.

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 10 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: The rules of “Would you rather...?” are simple; students have to choose one choice or the other. Of course neither selection is perfect, so students must weigh the pros and cons. Ask students if they would rather and provide them with two different options. Allow students a couple of minutes to think independently about this “Would you rather” question and then get them into small groups to discuss. Due to time issues, the groups can simply be based on where students are seated and allow the students to share their initial thoughts and then allow for students to challenge one another. Typically we will only do one “Would you rather” question per day. In addition, we often will refer students to a particular page in the textbook if they need some background information. After a few minutes, share some of the ideas with the entire class.

Variations: Here are some of the “Would you rather” questions we have used; of course it is easy to develop other course related options.

- Would you rather possess all rods or all cones?
- Would you rather be unbelievably attractive but emit a constant unalterable bad-smelling odor or be below average in attractiveness but emit an irresistible odor?
- Would you rather have a partner who is unbelievably attractive but who emits a bad-smelling odor or have a partner who is below average in attractiveness but emits an irresistible odor?
- Would you rather have anterograde or retrograde amnesia?
- Would you rather be incredibly intelligent but extremely unhappy or incredibly happy but extremely unintelligent?
- Would you rather have schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder?

ICE-BREAKER 2 Preposterous Questions

Summary: Preposterous questions are questions that have students try to think about outrageous “what if” questions that relate to the course material.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, questions can be adapted to specific class

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 10 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: One of the activities that we introduce is what we call “preposterous questions” (Eggleston, 2000). Specifically, we have used absurd, excessive, fantastical, and outrageous questions in many of our psychology classes in order to generate discussion and reveal underlying assumptions students have about topic areas. To start, get students into small groups and tell them to generate answers to the question by thoroughly considering all social, political, economic, psychological, biological, and similar issues.

Variations: Some of the preposterous questions that we have used:

- What if puberty started at 6 years old for everyone?
- What if puberty started at 35 years of age for everyone?
- What if everyone had a perfect memory?
- What if everyone lived to 150 or what if everyone only lived to 40?
- What if everyone had the same personality but still had different intelligence levels, different appearance, and different abilities?
- What if no people could express emotions?
- What if all people had the sexual organs of men and women and there was no male and female anymore?

ICE-BREAKER 3 Alphabet Brainstorming: What Do Psychologists Study?

Summary: This ice-breaker is useful for a first or early on ice-breaker and lets students explore their preconceived notions about what psychologists study.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 10 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: In classes of 30 or less, it is particularly effective to get students into groups of 5 or 6 and make this into an engaging competition. In larger classes, you could still have students work in groups or have people work individually. Another variation is to assign different parts of the classroom different letters (e.g., the upper back group will work with letter B; the front row will work with letter C, etc.). The task is simply to come up with as many topics, things, or issues that a psychologist studies that begin with the assigned letter. Even though students do not know much about psychology, thanks to the media they will have some ideas (although not all correct!). The letters that we have used are “P, D, T, C, S, and B” in the competition mode, and we actually collect and score the lists of topics and give a prize for the winning group (extra credit or candy, etc.). After groups or individuals have worked for around 5-10 minutes, take some time to share group lists or individual examples with the entire class. This gives the instructor an excellent opportunity to introduce some of the many topics that will be covered in the course and to point out some of the areas that students seem to overemphasize (e.g., mental illness) and areas that won't be covered in a scientific psychology course (e.g., haunted houses).

ICE-BREAKER 4 Consumer Psychologist for the Day

Summary: This ice-breaker is useful for a first or early on ice-breaker and lets students explore psychological jargon.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, also appropriate for Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 10 minutes

Materials Needed: Students will need the class textbook (at least one book per group) and note cards with the chapter numbers on them

Procedure: Tell students that one of the tasks of consumer psychologists is to determine effective names for products. There is an urban legend about the Chevy Nova, which was supposedly marketed unsuccessfully in Spanish-speaking countries because Nova is so close to the phrase “No vas” (which translates as “doesn’t go”). Fortunately, most consumer psychologists and marketing specialists are beyond making this type of error, and the class members can be too. Ask the class to generate car models that they are familiar with and write these on the board: examples may be Firebird, Camaro, Thunderbird, Mustang, etc. Ask them why there are not any Ford Chickens or Honda Rodents on the road. Now tell students their task is to use one of the glossary words from their assigned chapter as a new car model. They can choose which make (e.g., Chevy, Ford, Honda) would use it, what the car might look like (e.g., truck, sports car, luxury car), and an effective slogan that takes into account the psychological term found in the glossary. Students seem to really enjoy this activity while at the same time becoming familiar with the textbook and the glossary, as well as meeting other students. Some of our favorite examples include the “Honda Hypnotism—this car will mesmerize you!”, “The Dodge Dissociative: A sport utility vehicle that can change to a truck”; and the “Ford Placebo: The quality will make you think you are paying a lot, but you really aren’t.” Depending on the amount of time you want to give to students, you could even provide them with newsprint and markers so they could make posters of their new product.

ICE-BREAKER 5 Naturalistic Observation

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students explore one way psychologists conduct research.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Social Psychology, and Research Methods

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes, perhaps best in classes less than 100 students

Class Time Involved: Approximately 30 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Have students break into small groups of around 3-5 individuals. Ask the class as a whole to quickly generate as many places on campus as possible that would currently have people there (e.g., the library, parking lot, the cafeteria, student union, fitness center, etc.). Then send the groups out to one of the locations that you have listed. Tell the students to try to be as unobtrusive as possible and to simply watch behavior for 10 minutes and then return to class with their findings. Students usually come back with some very interesting findings in even such a short amount of time. Discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages to the naturalistic observation.

ICE-BREAKER 6 Pre-tests

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students and the instructor see what students know and what they don’t know about the current chapter or the entire class content.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 20 minutes

Materials Needed: Pre-test short answer or true/false questions (A, B, C, and D T/F Pieces of paper)

Procedure: Write approximately 10-20 pre-test short answer or true/false questions related to the entire class content or just one chapter. Rather than doing this task individually or on paper, conduct the pre-test as a group. Get students into small groups of approximately five students and then distribute envelopes with the letters A, B, C, D and T, F in different colors. You can either have these photocopied on different colors of paper, or write them on different colored note cards. Then when you ask the questions, give the students one minute to discuss the answer, and then have one student show the group's answer. If the answers are color coded (e.g., all the A's are on red paper), you can quickly see how many groups got the correct answer. If you want to make this into a competition, you can even keep points.

ICE-BREAKER 7 Spontaneous Show and Tell

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students get to know each other in a quick and fun way.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 15 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Tell students that to introduce themselves, they have to stand up and share something that they have with them at that moment that is something that tells something about them. Many students at first don't feel as if they have anything, but eventually students introduce themselves and talk about their shoes, their t-shirts, their backpacks, etc. In very large classes, the instructor may break the class into small groups to share this spontaneous show and tell. The nice thing about using a tangible object is that it breaks the ice easily even for the most introverted student.

Variations: To make this ice-breaker more relevant to the psychology class, have the students link the tangible show-n-tell to something about the class. For example, in a personality course, they have to share how their object relates to their personality. For example, my t-shirt is a bright color because I am very colorful and outgoing. In a developmental course, they should be encouraged to link their object to something from their childhood. For example, I am wearing tennis shoes and when I was a child, I had a hard time learning to tie my shoes.

ICE-BREAKER 8 Cartoon Mixer

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students move around the room to meet other students in a fun and easy way.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Stress Management, Health Psychology, and Social Psychology

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 50 individuals in classrooms that have enough room to move around.

Class Time Involved: Approximately 15 minutes

Materials Needed: Cartoon strips with 4-6 panels (enough panels for each student)

Procedure: Find cartoon strips with panels, ideally 4-6 panels. It works best if you have different cartoon strips (e.g., 1 Garfield, 1 Dilbert, 1 Peanuts, etc.). As students arrive to class, give them 1 cartoon panel. Then tell the students to find the rest of their cartoon and put the cartoon in order. This is usually a very engaging activity for the students to try and find their other group members. This activity can lead into a discussion about the importance of laughter, group behaviors, leadership behaviors, etc. In addition, this could be a way to get students into groups for an additional group discussion or group activity. Ideally, you can find enough cartoons that have some psychological relevance (Dilbert is full of industrial/organizational and leadership styles; many others emphasize family, marriage, and child development) so the groups can then discuss their cartoon. Although this much movement can be a bit chaotic and some instructors may not like the chaos, laughter, and movement, students tend to enjoy activities where they move around. A mobile activity may be particularly useful in those 3-hour classes.

ICE-BREAKER 9 Deck of Cards Group Role Assignments

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students move around the room to meet other students in a fun and easy way and to assign groups and group roles.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 100 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 15 minutes

Materials Needed: Deck of cards (enough cards for each student)

Procedure: Bring enough cards for each student in the class (i.e., you may need two decks of unmatching cards or you may need to eliminate the 2's, etc.). As students arrive to class, give them 1 card. Then tell the students to find the other students who have the same card as they do ignoring suite (e.g., all of the kings, all of the 7s). This is an effective way to get students into groups for an additional group discussion or group activity. In addition, the suites can be used to randomly assign group roles. For example, the diamond is the leader, the spade is the secretary or note taker, the heart is the verbal reporter, and the club is the time manager and equalizer (to make sure all people are working, all people are being heard and that you are completing your group task). After mixing the students up and assigning roles, you can ask a question related to the topic of the day. The benefit of this ice-breaker is that you randomly

assign the groups, so students meet new students. In addition, students get assigned roles so new leaders and new secretaries emerge, rather than the same students taking the same roles. Moreover, students tend to stay on task when they have clearly defined roles in a group.

ICE-BREAKER 10 Build Something!

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students get to know other students in a group project.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Social Psychology, Biopsychology

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 50 minutes

Materials Needed: Construction paper, straws, yarn, glue, tape, scissors, markers, Styrofoam cups, clay, other craft supplies, play money, old magazines

Procedure: Assign students to groups of 5 or 6 and give them some play money (either from a board game such as Monopoly or you can make your own) and tell them they can buy materials from you (include a price list) to build something. Let the students design their project and attempt to build their project. At the end of the class you will want to share the projects and discuss what they learned and how their group functioned. You may also want to give awards or extra credit for the projects judged as the best, most unique or least expensive. Students get to know each other by working on this activity, but it can also be useful to lead into discussions about group dynamics, in-group/out-group, leadership, obedience, creativity, etc.

Variations: In almost any psychology class, there is something that could be built with craft supplies that will increase their knowledge of the content while at the same time building community. For example, in social psychology they could build a replica of the "Robbers' Cave" experiment; in biopsychology they can build a brain, neuron, or eyeball; in human sexuality diagrams of the male or female body; in cognition a semantic network; or in developmental psychology a visual representation of Piaget's stages. Specifically using the old magazines, have students first draw a large picture of a brain, and label each part of the brain that was discussed in class. Then they should find a picture from the magazine that represents the function of each brain part and paste that to the appropriate location. For example, a student may find a picture of an eye or pair of glasses for the occipital lobe. A variety of interesting pictures can be used to represent the hypothalamus. This allows students the hands-on chance to label the brain and learn the functions. This project has created some excellent posters with some very interesting pictures. Most importantly, it helps students to learn, understand, ask for clarification, and memorize this complex information.

ICE-BREAKER 11 The Living Likert Scale

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students move around the room to express attitudes.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Research Methods, Personality, Tests and Measurement, Human Sexuality

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 15 minutes

Materials Needed: Large pieces of paper with 1 (strongly disagree), 2, 3, 4 (neutral), 5, 6, 7 (strongly agree) and Tape

Procedure: Before class starts hang the 1-7 pieces of paper across one side of the room in order. Tell students that you will read a variety of statements and then they are to go to the number that represents their attitude. Of course tell the students that at any time that they do not wish to share their true feelings they have the right to go to the 4 neutral spot. Tell students to not discuss or talk during the exercise, but to simply look at the different opinions and attitudes in the class. You may want to start with some simple attitudes and then lead to some more controversial attitudes. The questions should be related to the course content.

Variations: We have used this in many classes, but some of the interesting psychological attitudes we have used this for include:

- I think television can make children act aggressive.
- I think pornography should be legalized.
- I think our intelligence is based largely on genetics and heredity.
- I think psychologists prescribe too much medication for mental problems.
- I think electroconvulsive shock therapy is useful.
- I think dreams are important in understanding a person.

ICE-BREAKER 12 Who Am I?

Summary: This ice-breaker lets students move around the room to meet other students and review famous psychologists names in the class.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, History of Psychology

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 15 minutes

Materials Needed: Names of psychologists covered in class (one name for each student), tape

Procedure: Tape a psychologist's name on the back of the students as they come into class. Do not let them see the name on their own back. Either with the entire class or in small groups have the students one at a time ask no more than ten "yes" and "no" questions in an attempt to figure out who they are. This is a good overview of important names and a great way for students to get to know each other.

ICE-BREAKER 13 Pair/Share

Summary: This ice-breaker is a humanistic psychology listening technique that lets students get to know one another one student at a time.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Clinical and Counseling, Stress Management, Personality

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 5 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Tell students to find a partner. If there are an odd number of students, the instructor will have to be in a pair. Tell the students that the rules to pair/share are easy, for 2 minutes the first person does all of the talking and the second person must do nothing but listen (absolutely no talking!). Then after two minutes, the roles are reversed. Tell students to introduce yourself to the other person and tell them what is going well in your life and what is not going so well. After 2 minutes tell the students to reverse the roles. You can do this activity for a variety of days and tell the students to keep moving around the room and find someone they have not pair/shared with. After a few days, rather than just introductions, you can also have them discuss things about the class. At first students are very uncomfortable with this activity, but after some time, many students find they enjoy the chance to talk to someone without interruption.

ICE-BREAKER 14 Electronic Discussion Boards

Summary: This ice-breaker utilizes technology to help students get to know each other by posting on an electronic discussion board.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 100 individuals

Class Time Involved: None

Materials Needed: An electronic discussion board (e.g., Blackboard, WebCT, Frontpage, etc.)

Procedure: Although many people now use technology, some faculty members do not use it as a way to incorporate a simple ice-breaker. Set up an electronic discussion board using webpage software such as FrontPage or using a course management system such as Blackboard or WebCT. This discussion board can be useful for discussing a variety of course related issues. In the beginning of a course, you can ask students to logon to the discussion board and give an electronic introduction about who they are, where they are from, their major, hobbies, etc.

ICE-BREAKER 15 When the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing

Summary: This ice-breaker is a fun way to let students get to know another student in the class.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Biopsychology

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 5 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Tell students to find a partner and that one person has to be wearing shoes that tie. In other words, two people with tie shoes can't be partners until every group has one pair of shoes that tie. If there are an odd number of students, the instructor will have to be in a pair. Tell the students that they are to work together as a team to tie a shoe—but here is the catch—one person can only use their right hand and the other person can only use their left hand. Students typically find this activity quite difficult and quite funny. This activity is a good ice-breaker as well as good lead in to discussions on brain lateralization. One note, the day before this ice-breaker, you may want to ask students to wear shoes with laces to the next class period, otherwise you may end up with too many sandals or flip flops to do the activity.

PARTING WAYS

In many teaching resource books (e.g., McKeachie, 1999) there is an entire chapter devoted to getting started and what to do on the first day of a course, such as introducing the teacher and textbook, and allowing time for questions. Much less attention has been given to the equally important task of providing closure at the end of a unit, chapter, or entire course or seminar. These parting ways are useful to provide an academic review, an emotional and psychological closure, or a sense of accomplishment, as well as providing a way for the instructor and student to say good-bye. Parting-way activities provide closure to a topic, act as a review, and can help to create a sense of accomplishment.

PARTING WAY 1 Around the World in 15 Weeks

Summary: This parting way incorporates class content with technology and diversity issues by having students explore issues related to the course using internet resources.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Human Sexuality, Child Development, Adult Development, and Abnormal Psychology

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes, perhaps best in classes less than 100 students

Class Time Involved: Approximately 20-50 minutes

Materials Needed: A list of countries (one for every student in the class)

Procedure: Put students into small groups of geographically close countries (e.g., Iraq, Iran, etc.). Have students research a topic on the internet related to the class from the perspective of their country. Have students share their results with verbal reports, posters, written reports, or group power point presentations. We have found that this assignment helps to integrate more

diversity issues into the course, gives them some geography lessons, and allows some closure on the class (Smith & Eggleston, 2003; Smith & Eggleston, 2001). It works to provide some academic closure, as many of the primary ideas discussed in the course are presented again but from different perspectives.

Variations: This assignment could work in most any class, the topics we have used for different classes include:

- Human sexuality: STDs, prostitution, pornography, birth control
- Child Development: parenting attitudes, children's behaviors, the educational system
- Adult Development: marriage practices, education, careers, gender differences
- Abnormal Psychology: therapies, attitudes toward mental health

PARTING WAY 2 Share your knowledge—Letters, Brochures, Web Pages, Posters and Residence Life Programs

Summary: This parting way encourages students to share useful information with their families, friends, and other students via letters, brochures, web pages, posters, or residence life programs.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful for Introductory Psychology, Social Psychology, Biopsychology, Stress Management, Health Psychology, Human Sexuality, and Adult Development

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes, perhaps best in classes less than 100 students

Class Time Involved: Approximately 20-50 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Students can complete these parting ways activities individually or in small groups. The basic idea is for students to take what they have learned in the course and share this information with friends, family members, or other students. The students can write a letter detailing their own development in the course and what they have learned or useful information for the audience can be presented in the form of a brochure or informational webpage. Students can complete posters individually or in small groups. These posters can then be displayed around campus, such as in the residence halls or cafeteria. A very engaging parting way is to have students get into small groups and create informational and entertaining skits about certain pieces of information from the class. We have presented these skits to the residence halls.

Variations: These ideas can be used in most any psychology class; we have used the following topics for posters and residence life educational programs:

- Health Psychology and Biopsychology: Drug Abuse (assign each group a specific drug)
- Human Sexuality: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (assign each group a specific disease)
- Health Psychology and Stress Management: Stress (assign each group a specific way to deal with stress)
- Abnormal Psychology: Depression (assign each group a specific aspect of depression such as symptoms, causes, and various treatments)

PARTING WAY 3 Post-Tests

Summary: This parting way lets students and the instructor see what students learned over the course of the current chapter or the entire class content.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 20 minutes

Materials Needed: Post-test short answer or true/false questions (A, B, C, and D T/F Pieces of paper)

Procedure: Write approximately 10-20 post-test short answer or true/false questions related to the entire class content or just one chapter (if you used the pre-test ice-breaker, you can use the same questions again). You can either distribute the post-test on paper, or you can complete the post-test verbally in class to small groups of students. A particularly engaging way to complete an in-class test is to distribute envelopes with the letters A, B, C, D and T, F in different colors. You can either have these photocopied on different colors of paper, or write them on different colored note cards. Then when you ask the questions, you can ask the students to show the appropriate answer. If the answers are color coded (e.g., all the A's are on red paper), you can quickly see how many students got the correct answer.

PARTING WAY 4 What is Psychology?

Summary: This parting way encourages students to reflect on the big picture in psychology.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 30 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: E. R. Klein, a philosophy professor, (Pescosolido & Aminzade, 1999) suggests an end of the year activity asking one question, "What is philosophy?" It would be fascinating to see the answers to the question, "What is Psychology?" It would further be interesting to compare these answers depending on the specific course being taught (e.g., physiological, abnormal, development, etc.) This activity could either be done in class or as an outside of class writing assignment. Some of the answers could be shared in class.

PARTING WAY 5 Top 10 Lists

Summary: This parting way encourages students to reflect on the entire class and make some rankings about the important figures and the important research studies.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful in Introduction to Psychology, Social Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Personality, and History of Psychology

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 20 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: In many psychology courses, a great number of names and/or research studies are presented throughout the semester. A fun and educational way to review these lists is to have students, meeting in small groups, compile their own "Top 10" lists of the most important or significant studies, theories, or individuals discussed. Allow the students to share their lists and argue with other groups about the rankings. It is interesting to hear students debate the merits of Milgram and Festinger in a Social Psychology Class.

PARTING WAY 6 Game Show

Summary: This parting way encourages students to review the information in a chapter or the entire semester in a fun and engaging way.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Game show questions

Procedure: Review sessions for exams or the final exam are a common activity during the last week of classes. James Wangberg developed a way to bring academic closure and also have a sense of celebration by having the review session in the form of a game of charades (Pescosolido & Aminzade, 1999). Specifically, cards with relevant theories or psychological concepts can be made ahead of time and then students in groups are asked to act out the information. Other game-style activities such as Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, Who Wants to be a Millionaire?, and so forth, could also be adapted as a fun way to review for the final exam. To save the instructor time, students can write some of the questions to be used in the game show. For more information on playing Jeopardy, see Keutzer, C.S. (1993) Jeopardy in Abnormal Psychology, *Teaching of Psychology*, 20, 45-46.

PARTING WAY 7 Community Service and Service Learning

Summary: This parting way encourages students to complete the course by providing some community service. Ideally, a service learning component could be incorporated into the entire class over the entire semester. If this is not feasible, a one-time community service outing can be a very effective way to provide both academic and emotional closure.

Courses: Works well in upper-level courses

Class Size: Works well in classes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: This activity is completed outside of course, a great deal of time on the instructor's part to set up the service learning

Materials Needed: Community service partners and activities

Procedure: Group service learning projects can be a meaningful activity for classes. For example, a faculty member who teaches adult development may consider holding the last class at a local elderly care facility, leading bingo or another activity. This allows students to have fun, say good-bye to each other, and do something worthwhile in the community at the same time. Group homes, autism centers, homeless shelters, schools, and animal shelters all may be possibilities for students to share some of their time, energy, and knowledge. If you are fortunate enough to have a center for public service or a service learning coordinator on campus, you can simply contact the center or individual for preexisting programs that your students could volunteer with. If such a program does not already exist, you may want to contact people at local agencies such as nursing homes, childcare facilities, group homes, or hospitals. Contact the person and clearly state that you would like to allow your students to have the opportunity to volunteer at the agency. Ask if this is possible and with what activities they could use assistance. It is important to allow the community partner to decide what activities would be beneficial to the residents of their facilities. This assignment could be a required assignment or an extra-credit opportunity. After the students have participated in the service learning experience they should write a short reflective paper that incorporates information from the class and textbook. It is essential that students take time to reflect upon how what they experienced is related to the theories and research presented in class. If the class has a journal component, this assignment could be a journal entry or alternatively it could be a short paper. After the service learning experience, make sure to follow up with the community partner to see if the experience was effective and if they would be interested in allowing students to return. Make sure to send a thank you letter to the community partner to express your appreciation for allowing your students the opportunity. Ideally community service projects should be done throughout the semester so that classes can discuss the experiences and relate the service with course content.

PARTING WAY 8 A Class Memento

Summary: This parting way offers emotional and psychological closure for the students by giving the students something to take with them to remember the course.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 10 minutes

Materials Needed: Class memento

Procedure: When people go on an important trip or vacation, most of us bring home some memento of the experience to help us remember this important time in our lives (e.g., a seashell, a postcard). A course could be considered such an important trip. Wagenheim (1994) suggests having students complete sentence stems such as, "Something I have learned about

myself _____," or "Something I have learned about groups _____." These sentence stems could then be shared with other students and kept as a written reflection of the course. Use of certificates of achievement or completion as mementos is often times very appropriate. Certificates can include a quote for each student or recognition of a personal achievement ("To Bob Smith for completing SPSS and finally learning what a negative correlation means"). In addition, certificates can provide a humorous ending to the class. Other students can take part in making class certificates by having each student write a positive comment on each other's certificates. Particularly meaningful quotes can be distributed to students, or put on an overhead at the end of the last day of the course or during the final as a way of ending the class. For example, one of the authors has placed the following quote from the movie "Awakenings" which the class watched on an overhead at the conclusion of a course, "The human spirit is more powerful than any drug. It needs to be nourished with work, play, friendship, love. The simplest things. The things we have forgotten." In larger classes, fortunes can be distributed to students, rather than individual certificates. The fortunes are slips of paper containing either a brief summary of an important lesson from the course or a quote selected by the faculty member that reflects something about the course content or the class dynamics. Students are given the opportunity at the end of the last class or the final exam to draw a fortune from a container. To personalize the fortunes, faculty members can print them on mailing labels and then attach labels on the back of their business cards, and distribute them to students. Students often appreciate receiving the business card of a faculty member, even without the fortune. Quotes related to specific topics can easily be obtained via a variety of quote web sites such as www.quoteland.com.

PARTING WAY 9 Debates

Summary: This parting way encourages students to practice research, writing, and verbal skills by being involved in debates.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 students

Class Time Involved: Approximately 50 minutes per debate

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Debates are an excellent way to teach students some information about appropriate rules in academic discourse, researching a topic, and presenting an argument. In smaller classes, it is possible to have the entire class be involved in the debate. In larger classes, perhaps some students could receive extra-credit for being involved in the debate. In our courses, we usually have four debates throughout the semester so each student will only actually participate in one debate. We emphasize that in a well-prepared debate there actually is no "winning" side, but rather full discussion of both sides of the issue. Assign the class into two groups (e.g., pro and con). Tell the students that they will need to have the following things presented: a clear thesis statement, an outline of their arguments, research to support each of their arguments, a clear conclusion statement, and rebuttals. We have the teams decide who will be responsible for each of these elements of the debate, or you could assign the debate roles. Obviously, there are a variety of ways to conduct a debate, but we have found the following format very successful:

- Pro team presents their argument (10 minutes)

- Con team presents their argument (10 minutes)
- Pro team rebuttals (5 minutes)
- Con team rebuttals (5 minutes)
- Questions from the class (10 minutes)

Variations: Debates can be used in most any class. Some effective topics we have used include:

- Animal Research
- Nature versus Nurture
- Language is a uniquely human ability
- Day Care is advantageous for children
- Pornography has useful benefits
- Prostitution should be legalized
- Psychologists should prescribe medications
- Beauty Pageants
- Homosexuals should be allowed in the military

PARTING WAY 10 Life Maps

Summary: This parting way activity puts closure on developmental courses by having students create a life map.

Courses: Works well in all psychology classes, especially useful for developmental psychology courses

Class Size: Works well in class sizes of less than 75 individuals

Class Time Involved: Approximately 30-50 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Instruct them to use a poster board and create a life map with at least 10 high points (e.g., high school graduation) that they have experienced in their life. The map should also include at least 10 things they would like to experience during their lives (e.g., graduate from college). Encourage students to make their maps as visual as possible and to be creative by adding pictures or other objects symbolizing the events. Also, tell the students to include approximate ages for all of the events detailed in their maps. While the posters are completed outside of class, sharing the posters with other students is a great way to put closure on the course. In a quicker variation, students can complete the assignment on notebook paper (although these are not as much fun to share in class, they are much more portable). We actually assign grades for this project or include it as a participation point activity. Many students comment that this was a fun and thought-provoking project that they have kept.

PARTING WAY 11 Research that Really Matters

Summary: This parting way encourages students to complete the course by providing some service to a campus organization or resource.

Courses: Works well in upper level classes such as Tests and Measurement, Research Methods, Experimental Psychology

Class Size: Works well in smaller classes

Class Time Involved: This activity is completed outside of course, presentations in class

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: In many tests and measurement or research methods courses, students complete research that is not particularly meaningful or useful. Students are going to take the projects much more seriously if the research is actually beneficial and useful. Have students get into small groups and meet with campus organizations or resources such as the library, food service, career center, the registrars' office, student government, etc.). Have students develop surveys that would benefit these organizations and resources. Then allow students to administer the surveys, tally the surveys and complete a report for you and for the organization or resource they assessed. This has been a very meaningful project for the class. In fact, campus organizations and resources now approach the students to help them with their survey needs. Of course, this activity must be started early in the semester and becomes a course long project. The parting way closure is to present the research to the entire class and invite other members of the campus (the librarian, the Dean, etc.) to hear the final research projects.

PARTING WAY 12 Follow the Bouncing Ball

Summary: This parting way is a fun way for students to end the course and also share something about the course.

Courses: Works well in any class

Class Size: Works well in smaller classes

Class Time Involved: 10-50 minutes depending on how long you allow students to talk and how long you let the activity go on

Materials Needed: Light plastic ball (approximately 10 inches in diameter) Permanent marker

Procedure: Before class write approximately 10 different statements on the plastic ball using a permanent marker. Make some of the statements class specific but some of them can include: "Favorite thing about the class," "Most memorable moment," "Main thing I learned," "Most surprising information," "Still confusing information," etc. Then get students into a large circle and toss the ball to one another, whatever statement is facing the student, the student must read and answer. After the answer, the student then passes the ball on to someone else. If the students don't want to throw the ball, you can simply pass the ball as long as the statements get rolled around.

PARTING WAY 13 Psychology's Greatest Hits

Summary: This parting way encourages students to think about the primary researchers or people presented in the course, the music makes for a fun and memorable activity.

Courses: Works well in upper level classes that emphasize researchers such as social psychology, personality, and history

Class Size: Works well in smaller classes

Class Time Involved: 20 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Procedure: Get students into small groups and have them use their textbooks and/or notes to generate a long list of the people or researchers presented in the course. Then have students try to think of a well-known song that could be each of the researcher's theme song based on the topic area that they studied. After giving each small group some time to ponder this activity, ask them to share some of their favorites with the entire group. This activity acts as an academic closure as they review the names and major ideas of each researcher. In addition, it is a fun final activity. We actually first did this activity with other faculty members at the National Institute for Teaching in Florida (so thanks to that fun-loving group for a great parting way activity!). Here are some of our favorites: Sternberg (What's Love got to do with it?), Milgram (The authority song), Harlow (We're the Monkeys!), Freud (Let's talk about sex), Meyer (Don't worry, be happy), and Maslow (Send in the clowns).

PARTING WAY 14 Class Closure Cards

Summary: This parting way encourages students to reflect on the entire class and make some closing remarks about the class depending on the card they draw.

Courses: Works well in all psychology courses, especially useful in Introduction to Psychology, Biopsychology, Social Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Personality, and History of Psychology

Class Size: Works well in all class sizes

Class Time Involved: Approximately 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Cards with various questions written on them

Procedure: This activity provides a great deal of closure to the entire course while still having students work in groups and discuss issues. Have students break into small groups and either let them draw or hand out a closure card. Give each group about 10 minutes to discuss their closure card and then ask for short reports to the entire class. You can have a variety of issues on the cards, but the following tend to work well: What was the big picture of this course? What areas still seem a bit confusing? What information was the most surprising? What areas do you think need the most future research, why? What areas are the most applicable to everyday life? What topics did you find the most interesting? What other classes or disciplines are linked to this class? What things could be changed about this course to increase student learning?

PARTING WAY 15 Who Said That?

Summary: This parting way encourages students to think about the primary researchers or people presented in the course.

Courses: Works well in upper level classes that emphasize researchers such as social psychology, personality, and history

Class Size: Works well in small to medium sized classes

Class Time Involved: 20 minutes

Materials Needed: A series of famous quotes from psychologists/great thinkers and a list of psychologists/great thinkers

Procedure: Get students into small groups of around 5 students. Present the students with a list of possible psychologists/great thinkers. Then read a quote from a famous psychologist/great thinker and have the groups discuss who might have said that quote. You can either have groups yell out the answers or go around the room asking specific groups. For a competition you can keep score, although it is interesting even without the points and is an excellent academic review. One variation instead of "who said this?", but requires more work on the instructors' part is to have a power point or overhead slide pictures of famous psychologists and students guess who the psychologist is in the picture. Some of our favorite quotes from www.quoteland.com:

"Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten."

[-B. F. Skinner](#)

"Creative minds have always been known to survive any kind of bad training."

[-Anna Freud](#)

"To the man who only has a hammer in the toolkit, every problem looks like a nail."

[-Abraham Maslow](#)

"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a little better; whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is the meaning of success."

[-Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

"There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from."

[-Elizabeth Kubler-Ross](#)

"When making a decision of minor importance, I have always found it advantageous to consider all the pros and cons. In vital matters, however, such as the choice of a mate or a profession, the decision should come from the unconscious, from somewhere within ourselves. In the important decisions of personal life, we should be governed, I think, by the deep inner needs of our nature."

[-Sigmund Freud](#)