



## String Web

### Introduction

This activity helps students think about their existing networks and the connections that are all around them.

### Materials:

- Ball of string/yarn

### Instructions:

- Participants and facilitator should begin by standing or sitting in a circle on the floor.
- The facilitator starts by holding the end of the string and sharing a brief fact about him/herself.
  - If you would like to use this activity as an icebreaker, you can also ask participants to introduce themselves before sharing their fact.
- Anyone else in the circle who has a similar fact may raise their hand. The facilitator, still holding on to the end of the yarn, gently tosses or rolls the ball to one of the participants raising their hand.
- The participant holds onto that section of the string and shares how their interests are similar to the facilitator's and then states a new fact about themselves. Anyone in the circle who has something in common with this person's new fact raises their hand and the game continues until a web is formed.
- For example:
  - Facilitator: My name is Elaine and I love to ice skate.
  - Participant #1: My name is Matt and I like skating too - I play ice hockey. I have 3 pet dogs.
  - Participant #2: My name is Megan and I don't have any dogs, but I have 3 pets: 2 cats and a lizard. I want to become a nurse.
  - Participant #3: My name is Brian and I know I want to have a career in healthcare, but I'm not sure what job. My favorite food is tacos.
- By the end of the game, everyone should be holding the string at least once. You can keep playing until the ball of yarn is entirely unraveled with participants holding several parts of the string, creating an even more intricate web.

### Discussion

- Was there ever a point in the activity when it seemed like someone wouldn't find something in common? Probably not! You can always find ways to connect with others, even over trivial things. Connecting over similarities allows you to expand your network.
- What happens if you let go of one of your strings? An important part of building a network is maintaining it. When you meet someone new, make sure you get

their contact information so you can follow up with them. If you don't engage your network, then your connections weaken.

- How many times were you holding onto the string? The more strings you're holding, the more times you spoke up and made an effort to make a connection, and the more connections you've made, the stronger your network. The opportunities that come from your network won't just magically appear - you have to be engaged and willing to reach out to others in order to make the most of your connections. Speaking up and reaching out to others can be intimidating, but the more you practice the easier it gets.
- Look around at the web you've created. You're all connected to each other, maybe in ways you did not expect. Even if your string isn't directly connected to someone, you're connected to someone else who is connected to that person; that's how networks function - you use your network to make the connections that you can't make directly on your own.

## Reflecting & Connecting

- Networks help you move forward with your goals, both professional and personal, and sometimes knowing the right person can give you a push to achieve those goals.
- Some studies have shown that up to 85% of job seekers find employment through the people in their network – so it's important to expand that network to include people in your desired career pathway.

## Tips for Networking

Networking can be challenging - introverts might not like putting themselves out there and extroverts might have a hard time following through. Networking can sometimes feel awkward or artificial, but it's a skill you improve every time you do it and there are concrete exercises to help. To be a better networker you can follow these tips:

- Practice! Building a network is not something you become good at immediately. Put yourself outside of your comfort zone, try to find opportunities, explore ways to meet people, and don't be afraid to introduce yourself!
- Be aware of your body language - have a firm handshake and maintain eye contact. Sincerity is best communicated through nonverbal cues.
- If you're really struggling, prepare a "one-minute talk" about yourself so that when you meet someone you'd like to have in your network you can concisely make an introduction. Your one-minute talk should answer:
  - Who are you?
  - What do you do?
  - Why are you here?
  - Why should the person you're speaking to care?

- Ask lots of questions. People love to talk about themselves and asking questions will allow you to become more engaged and able to find common connections.
- Remember that you're a connection too. Help others network by asking them about their goals, and introduce them to people you know with similar interests!