

MENTOR ME!

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Latest revision: 2.19.12

Introduction

MENTOR ME! is an energetic, tech-free, large group activity that simulates looking past the visibly successful to find their invisible benefactor while simultaneously putting networking skills into practice.

Background

All organizations have both power sources, both visible – those that have achieved success - and invisible –those who were crucial to them achieving success. MENTOR ME! integrates the skills of networking to find the invisible benefactors and mentors that are crucial for success. MENTOR ME! is to be applied to [Gameful Challenge #8: Making the Invisible Visible](#). The game is designed to be played with the minimal equipment of a business card, making it ideal for quick play at conferences, workshops, and job fairs. The equipment can easily be modified to fit various communities.

Within the game, a single mentor privately enables a person of potential to become successful. Members of the group network with one another while their successful peers try to be as visible as possible. Astute players will learn to look past the flashiness of the successful and figure out who is helping these people earn their success in the hopes of having their own encounter with the mentor.

Genre

Large group icebreaker

Description

Summary:

During the game, players form a circle and pair up by making eye contact. After holding eye contact for ten seconds (a harder feat than it would seem), they meet their partner to "network." If the player networks with the secret Mentor, they become Successful. The Successful will spend the rest of the game attempting to draw as much attention to themselves as possible. Players that break eye contact to look at the Successful do not get to network with their partners. The game ends when every player has networked with the Mentor.

Number of players:

- 10-30 players.

Equipment needed and setup:

- Each player will need multiple copies of a business card or resume. The players will need at least one for each member of the group.
- Prior to the game start, one player will be secretly selected as a Mentor. The game organizer can use any random method to choose the Mentor. For instance, the game organizer may give his or her business card to each player, asking the players to keep them hidden from view. Every business card will say "Potential" on the back, except for one that says, "Mentor."

The roles of the game are as follows:

- The Mentor
 - Randomly (and secretly) chosen at the start of the game.
 - Helps one person at a time achieve success, but that person must be lucky (or smart) enough to find them.
 - Humble and only has limited resources, so they try to keep their identity hidden.
 - Should be torn between wanting to spend more time on their successful protégé and mentoring new potential into success.
- The Successful
 - There will be no Successful in the first round (possibly the first few rounds).
 - Achieved success by meeting The Mentor.
 - For the rest of the game, this player wants to celebrate their success by being as eye-catching as possible during networking rounds. They want the attention on them by any means necessary.
 - Sharing hidden talents is encouraged!
- The Potentials
 - The non-Mentor players before they become Successful.
- (OPTIONAL) Moderator
 - Keeps time for rounds and order during the game, but is not a player in the game.
 - Suggested that one player acts as the official moderator (usually the game organizer)

The actions of a round are as follows:

- Reflection: All players form a circle and close their eyes for three seconds.
- Networking Phase:
 - All Potentials and the Mentor open their eyes and attempt to network by maintaining eye contact with the first person they see for ten seconds.
 - Any Successful, proud of their achievements, try to be as visible as possible by any means necessary - shouting, dancing, reciting the pledge, singing, etc.
 - If a Potential glances at The Successful, they and their partner are to continue watching The Successful for the rest of the round and are considered to have networked with The Successful.
- Networking Results: At the end of ten seconds, the Potentials meet based on their networking success (if there are not any Successful yet, then nobody is considered to have looked at them):
 - The Potentials (and their partners) that looked at a Successful shake hands with all of The Successful. They have networked, but it was not very fulfilling.
 - The Potential pairs that did not look at The Successful shake hands and exchanged names, having successfully networked. Even if the Potentials broke eye contact, so long as they did not look at a Successful, they successfully networked with one another.
 - If the networked Potentials also did not break eye contact for the full ten seconds, they exchange business cards as well. They have successfully collaborated, a much more meaningful exchange.
 - If a Potential successfully collaborates with the Mentor, the Mentor covertly congratulates him/her and that player is Successful for the rest of the game.
 - In the event that a Potential was not able to pair up but still did not look at The Successful, the player can approach one pairing, silently give each member their business card, and return to their spot in the circle. Their networking was not very personal, but at least they got their name out there!
- Prepare for Reflection: The circle is reformed and the round is complete.
- Win Condition: The game continues until all players have successfully been mentored. When the game is complete, players should make sure they have a business card from each person.

Key Features

- Trains players to look past the obviously successful to find those who can help them achieve their own success.
- Allows players to practice networking skills – very useful for a person entering a new field or looking to expand their network.
- Increases confidence and trust through prolonged eye contact, creating real life networks.
- Promotes liveliness while playing the role of Successful - enthusiasm will likely continue after the game is completed.
- Extremely flexible design – can easily be adapted to other communities by simply changing the traded item, and optionally, the titles of the roles.
- Accessibility of design – does not require technology to play.
- Low to no physical action game allows participation from people with a variety of physical skills.
- Little to no cost of entry allows for participation from all economic backgrounds.

Dynamics

Several possible dynamics may emerge depending on the role.

- The Mentor
 - May occasionally break eye contact or look at The Successful during networking phases to throw potentials off their track.
 - May make their identity known. In this case, The Successful ought to step up to the challenge of distracting the Potentials.
- The Successful
 - When there are very few Successful, they may be nervous and not very loud. This will likely subside as the number of Successful increases.
 - May start a Networking Phase very quiet and still, waiting until the timer is almost out before suddenly shouting or jumping
 - May pretend to be Potential to make eye contact with somebody before revealing that they are Successful
 - May team up with other Successful, for instance, one might sing a popular song while another pantomimes the lyrics
- The Potentials
 - May start plugging ears or using hands as blinders to prevent being distracted
 - May initially be nervous during Networking Phase – laughing, breaking eye contact for no real reason. As game goes on, nervousness about making eye contact will probably subside in favor of competition.
 - If they have deduced The Mentor, just as the Networking phase starts, may make a loud noise to get The Mentor to look at them.

- The Moderator
 - May also act as a photographer – there will probably be some good photo ops
 - Between rounds, may give rule refreshers or hints
 - May also act distracting, especially in early rounds to encourage The Successful
 - At the start of the Networking Phase, should give a moment of grace period for people to make eye contact
 - Can vary between being very lax with what counts as breaking eye contact to not letting people close both eyes at the same time, but should be consistent within the same round.

Variations

- Theme – simply changing the traded item (and, optionally, the role names) allows the game to be easily ported into a variety of communities, including:
 - Recipes at bridal showers
 - Definition notecards in study groups – the successful would be encouraged to shout out everything they know about the subject
 - Even intangible objects, such as “Secrets” or “Achievements” at a family reunion
- Eye contact – certain people have a severe aversion to eye contact, such as some individuals with social anxiety or autism. If a player looks extremely uncomfortable during the game, this may be the cause. A solution may be to have the Potential pairing look at each other’s palms or mouths instead; gently suggest that, within their comfort zone, players practice eye contact during the Networking Results phase when it is more one on one and not a large group.
- Doubleup:
 - Two (or, possibly more, if the group is large enough) Mentors are assigned at the start of the game.
 - Each Mentor has a unique trademark they pass on to The Successful when they meet. For example, Mentor A might have all of her Successful do jumping jacks and Mentor B might have all of his Successful yodel.
 - Whichever Mentor and Successful team has the most members after the final potential has become Successful will win the game.
 - All other rules remain the same.
- Momentum:
 - Must be played with a moderator
 - Players stand in a large clump instead of a circle.
 - Players cannot stop moving during the Networking Phase.

- Any player that bumps, jostles, or otherwise physically touches another potential is scandalized and forced to sit out the next round.
 - Their partner does not get to participate in the Networking Results phase, but does get to play in the following round.
- All other rules remain the same.
- Ideamakers:
 - Each time the circle is reformed, the players are required to stand by two different people from the previous round. The circle should be constantly shuffled up as a result.
 - Those that meet The Successful get to say, “I’ve got a great idea, who can you recommend to help?”
 - The Successful responds with “My mentor! They were across/left/right from me a bit ago.” The direction corresponds with where the mentor was in the circle on the previous round.
 - Successful collaborators may also discuss who they think the mentor may be. Networkers may not.
 - All other rules remain the same.