



EXPAND
POSSIBILITIES

What Makes You Happy? Identifying and Sharing Sparks

Tapping Passions to Expand Possibilities

Description

Participants will identify their deep interests, talents or activities they love—their sparks—and share with the group in this interactive activity.

Objective

- Build and strengthen relationships among participants
- Build and strengthen relationships among participants and leaders
- Deepen understanding of the element of Expand Possibilities

Connecting with the Framework

Expand Possibilities focuses on connecting people with new ideas, people, places, and experiences.

Planning and Preparation

 **Participants:** Any size

 **Materials:**

- Blank paper
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Sticky notes (alternative: half sheets of paper or index cards and tape)

 **Time:** 45 minutes

 **Set up:**

- Before starting, distribute the materials so that everyone has a writing utensil, blank paper, and a sticky note (or alternative).
- Identify some open wall space where you will be able to post each person's sticky note, with enough space for everyone to gather around and read them. (If you do not have wall space, collect the sticky notes and have everyone sit in a circle where they can see you.)

Facilitator Notes:

Encourage positive expressions of sparks. It's unlikely (but not impossible) that someone's spark could be a harmful activity (drugs, self-injurious behaviors, etc.). If a participant brings up a spark that could be harmful, follow up after the activity to see if they need support or resources.

Facilitator Instructions

1. If participants have been introduced to the Developmental Relationships Framework, let them know that through this activity we will be practicing the element of Expand Possibilities.
2. Let participants know you'll be asking them to reflect on some questions to themselves and to jot down their answers on the paper you handed out. After each of the following questions, pause for a few moments to give the participants time to think and write before moving on to the next question:
 - What are some things you are really interested in?
 - What is an activity you are really good at?
 - If you woke up one morning and were told you could do one activity for as long as you wanted, what activity would it be?
 - When in your life do you feel happiest? What are you doing at those times?
 - Are there times when you lose track of time because you like the activity you are doing so much? What is that activity?
3. Explain: What you just did was an exercise to start identifying your own sparks. Sparks are interests or passions that give people great enjoyment and often a sense of purpose. They can be sports, music, dance, art, technology, reading, caring for others, math, science, animals, and much more. Share some of your own sparks with participants as examples.
4. Ask participants to now look at the answers on their paper and circle the things that they think are their sparks. Be sure to walk around and ask anyone if they need help identifying their sparks.
5. Ask participants to choose one of their sparks. Without saying anything or letting others see, they should write that spark on their sticky note or half sheet. Tell them to try to write in plain handwriting so that other people won't be able to guess who wrote it by the handwriting. Tell participants that they will be sharing their spark on the wall, and that people will guess which one is theirs.



Putting It Into Practice

Now that you have some insights into subjects your group is interested in, think about ways that you can Expand Possibilities for people in your group by making relevant connections to these topics. Consider integrating interest areas into your curriculum or programming, if possible. Or just have informal conversations or interactions with individual participants.

6. Collect the sticky notes (make sure to mix them up) and put them all on a wall with enough space between each so that all of the participants will be able to read what is written on the notes without too much crowding.
7. Ask participants to move around the room and read the sparks written on the notes. Have the list of questions below written on the board and let them know you will be talking about them after they've had a chance to read all the sparks. When participants have had a chance to read all of the notes, come back together as a full group.
8. Take each sticky note off of the wall one by one. As you do, ask the group to guess who wrote the note you are taking down. After participants have had a chance to guess who wrote each note, ask the real writer of the note to identify themselves and explain their spark (if time allows).

Reflect

Discuss these questions as a large group:

- Did you find anyone else in the group who had a spark in common with you (even if it's not the one you wrote down)?
- Is anyone inspired to learn more about or consider trying someone else's spark?
- Who helped you develop your spark? What did they do?
- Who would be willing to teach others how to do your spark?
- Which spark besides your own would you enjoy doing the most?
- Which spark surprised you the most?
- Which spark do you think would be the most difficult to do?

Taking Action (optional)

Try out the Sparks Fair activity (Page 183) as a follow up.

As an extension activity, ask participants to interview an adult in their life using the "Sparks Interview Form." They can then share back with the group something interesting or inspiring that they learned through the interview. You can also encourage them to write a thank you note to the interviewee, including one big idea that they took away from the interview.

Sparks Interview Form

Choose an adult to interview about their sparks. At the start of your interview, explain to the person you are interviewing that sparks are talents or deep interests that bring pleasure and meaning to our lives.

1. What is one of your sparks? A spark is a talent or an activity or an interest that gives you a lot of enjoyment and that means a lot to you.
2. How do you feel when you are doing or are focused on your spark?
3. What is something that most people don't know about your spark?
4. Do you do anything to get better at your spark? If so, what do you do?
5. Is there anyone in your life who supports your spark, such as cheering you on when you do it or helping you get better at it?
6. Have you met any new people or gone to any new places or encountered any new ideas or cultures as a result of your spark?
7. Do you ever get frustrated by your spark? Do you have to do things that you don't really like in order to experience your spark? For example, someone whose spark is riding horses might not enjoy cleaning up after them.
8. Have you learned any lessons about life as a result of your spark?