

GAMES, STORIES & MAGIC FOR CAREER PRACTITIONERS **A** GAMES, STORIES & MAGIC

GAMES, STORIES & MAGIC FOR CAREER PRACTITIONERS **SURPRISES**

FOR CAREER PRACTITIONERS **BOOK** GAMES, STORIES & MAGIC FOR

# A BOOK OF Surprises

*by Emily Sylvester*

OF CAREER PRACTITIONERS GAMES, STORIES & MAGIC FOR CAREER PRACTITIONERS

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*A Book of Surprises*  
*has been written as a gift to you,*  
*the career practitioner.*  
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*I'd love to hear from you*  
*and will give you credit in future printings*  
*for any input I use.*  
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# About The Author:

**Emily Sylvester** has over 15 years experience in designing and delivering highly popular workshops and training sessions across Canada. Her sessions are sought out by practitioners looking for original and practical ways to make their individual and group services more attractive and effective. She has recently been teaching credit courses to career practitioners across the Northwest Territories, including Canada's newest territory, Nunavut.

Emily holds an Alberta Award of Excellence in Career Development, is a founding and executive member of the Career Development Association of Alberta, a member of Senate with the University of Alberta, and a lay minister to two rural churches.

Emily, her husband, and their two teenage daughters live on a small farm in northern Alberta.

# Introduction

Some of the clearest insights we have and remember are discovered in times of play and laughter. The games, stories, and magic tricks in these pages will help you give your clients an "Ah ha!" experience that makes their learning their own.

**A BOOK OF SURPRISES: Games, Stories, And Magic For Career Practitioners** contains the pick of hundreds of my workshops and over a dozen presentations at national and regional conferences.

I hope that you will use these tools to introduce your own career and employment exercises to classroom teens, professionals, persons with disadvantages, and everyone in between.

I enjoyed creating these surprises; my clients enjoy using them; now it's your turn.



# foreword

I love career development, but I must confess that I have never found a career development book that, as the old saying goes, "I just couldn't put down." Then I picked up this book, and soon discovered that I was reading faster and faster so that I could get to the next story or game. All the while I was thinking, "What will Emily come up with next? How does she come up with these things? I wonder if this will work with my clientele? I wonder with whom I can try this activity?" (Actually, I don't think in grammatically correct sentences - the last thought really was: "I wonder who I can try this activity with?"). The activities in this book are the career development equivalent of potato chips or salted nuts-have one and you won't be able to stop.

I then started to ponder why these activities had this effect on me. I've read a considerable number of career development leader's guides, activity books and workshop plans, none of which have had this effect on me. My pondering led to the obvious answer, which lies in the title, "A Book of Surprises." This book really is a book of surprises, and surprises are exceedingly compelling. I wanted to turn the page because I knew there was a surprise in store for me-guaranteed! This, to say the least, is a real treat.

Surprises are compelling in their own right; people like to turn a corner and meet the unexpected when they know the unexpected is safe and useful. Yet how much of career development practice removes surprise, creates predictability and actively makes the unexpected expected? Too much, I now think after reading this book. Surprise lightens dark situations, creates its own motivation for moving on, fosters different ways of thinking and shifts ways we perceive situations. All of these effects of surprise are precisely what we career development practitioners work so hard to help our clients experience. Here, Emily uses surprise directly and seemingly effortlessly to achieve results that come naturally to the experience of surprise. It makes a lot of sense, and Emily puts together stories, games and magic with a surprising sensibility.

Dave Redekopp



# 1 Icebreakers

A  
BOOK OF  
**Surprises**

*Use icebreakers to insert energy into the beginning of your sessions.  
It catches your group's attention and starts with a high level of interest and involvement.*

## This Is Going To Get Serious—NOT

This is a good ice-breaker for getting people laughing at the beginning of your session. It's also a way to give names to clusters in your group when there are too many participants to learn individually right at the start. I wouldn't use this with teens. Decide for yourself!

**Instructions:** Start by putting four or five symbols or names on a flip-chart. Choose symbols that are relevant to your group. One day I was doing a session on dealing with stress with a group of trucking-company managers, and I put the name of various commercial tires up on the chart. You can use colours, pets, T.V. shows, or simple geometric shapes—circle, square, triangle, and diamond.

Ask each person to choose a symbol that they identify with, or, if you are naming smaller groups among your participants, have each group choose one of the symbols to identify themselves. Each group can make a place card for themselves with their symbol (so, later, you can ask a question and say, "Let's hear from the "Trekkies" on this one!").

After each person or group has chosen a symbol, say: "How many of you chose the \_\_\_\_\_ symbol?, . . . the \_\_\_\_\_?, . . . the \_\_\_\_\_?", until you have named them all. (Don't keep an accurate count, but note which symbol drew the largest response.) Then

continue: "There's a lot we can tell about people by the symbols they choose. Your deep inner identity is somehow revealed by the choices you make. For instance, people who choose \_\_\_\_\_ tend to be smart, stable, and phenomenally efficient. People who choose \_\_\_\_\_ tend to be flexible, innovative, and extremely creative. People who choose \_\_\_\_\_ tend to be social, friendly, and natural leaders."

Continue until you have interpreted each of the symbols, using my interpretations or making up your own as you go along. Make your interpretations flattering, and you will notice people nodding as they recognize themselves! Leave the symbol that attracted the most responses to the last; then, naming it, say, "And people who choose \_\_\_\_\_ are preoccupied with sex."





## I Don't Think There's a Difference. Do You Think...

I have used this as an icebreaker on critical thinking for years, and just recently added a component on self-esteem. It works with students and adults. The inspiration for this exercise came from Marnie Robb in a training for trainers session in Edmonton.

**Materials:** You will need two cans of pop, one diet and one regular. They should both be from the same brand. You also need a tall bucket of cold water. The bucket should be at least thirty centimetres (fifteen inches) deep; an ice cream bucket is too shallow.

**Instructions:** Split your group into two parts. You can do this by splitting the room into two parts, or by people who have birthdays in the first half of the year and people who have birthdays in the second, or by persons who prefer cats to dogs and vice versa.

Ask people in one of the groups to think of all the possible reasons why regular pop would be lighter than diet pop. You are going to give them a few minutes to think before you ask for their answers. Logical reasons, but also frivolous reasons, are acceptable. For example, you would accept the reasoning that since regular pop has less carbonation in it, a lighter weight of can is made to contain it.

Ask the second group to work on the same assignment, but they are to think of all the possible reasons why diet pop is lighter. You will accept the reasoning that diet pop cans are painted a lighter colour and therefore weigh less, et cetera.

Give your participants a couple of minutes to think, then ask for one volunteer from each group to come to the front. Give each volunteer a can of the pop they have been thinking about, regular or diet. Ask one to go first. Give them one minute for their group to shout out as many reasons as possible why their pop is the lighter one. The volunteer doesn't need to write these down, or even judge good reasons from bad. They just need to count them.

Give the same amount of time to your second group to brainstorm a quantity of reasons why their pop is the lighter one. Encourage noisy responses.

When both groups have had their say, ask participants what they really believe. How many think that the regular pop is the lighter one? How many think the diet one is? How many think that they both weigh the same? Most people will answer the third option.

There is only one way to find out! Have your volunteers put their cans of pop in the bucket of cold water and tell you what they see. One floats but the other sinks. (Try it yourself and see which one does which. Remember that when you add sugar to water in a recipe, the sugar goes into solution. It adds weight but minimal volume to the water.)

*I Don't Think There's a Difference. Do You Think...*

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Point out that the world is still full of surprises. Most of us thought both pops would weigh the same. Ask your participants to brainstorm beliefs on the subject of your workshop. For instance, if you are leading a session on work-search, they could brainstorm: “there aren't any jobs out there”, “employers read resumes”, or “I can get a job with my computer training”. Give them time to brainstorm up to twenty beliefs.

Ask your participants which of these beliefs lift them up, and which pull them down. Ask them to draw their own buckets of water with a floating can of pop near the surface. Inside their drawings of the pop, have them write three ideas that would help raise themselves up whenever they think on the subject of your session. Finally, ask them to remind themselves of these beliefs every time they see a pop in their fridge, on a commercial, wherever. Every time they do, they will lift themselves up. *It's the real thing!*



**A Psychological Tip**

Whenever you're called on to make up your mind,  
and you're hampered by not having any  
the best way to solve the dilemma, you'll find,  
is simply by spinning a penny.

No—not so that chance shall decide the affair  
while you're passively standing there moping;  
but the moment the penny is up in the air,  
you suddenly know what you're hoping.

Piet Hein

