

GROUP DISCUSSION

TIPS FOR FACILITATING DYNAMIC DISCUSSION

SOMETIMES PEOPLE JUST DON'T TALK. SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE SLOW TO OPEN UP. SOMETIMES THE DISCUSSION IS JUST A LITTLE SLOW. SOMETIMES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE DRAWING CONVERSATION OUT YOUR GROUP MEMBERS. WE WANT TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH THESE SITUATIONS.

SOME OF THE TIPS BELOW COME FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHER GROUPS AND RESOURCES

- **USE VISUAL AIDS DURING YOUR DISCUSSION.** You'd be surprised at how whiteboards, index cards, and other visual aids support the flow of discussion. The visual aid can be anything that prompts conversation, breaks the ice, or brings the topic to real-life application points.
- **BE PREPARED TO SHARE FIRST.** As the leader, you should be prepared to answer all questions that you ask during the discussion. Your openness will be contagious; your openness will encourage others to participate.
- **NEVER INTERRUPT ANYONE WHEN THEY ARE TALKING, UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.** There are times that you'll need to interrupt, but try your best to give all group members time to share their thoughts and ideas.
- **USE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS.** A simple way to follow up a question is to simply ask, "Why?", "How?", and "When?"
- **DON'T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE.** This is a skill that must be learned. Silence does not necessarily mean disengagement. Silence can mean that people are in thinking about their answers. Allow time for the group to think through what has been said or viewed.
- **THANK PEOPLE FOR SHARING.** When you thank your group members for sharing, especially the quiet ones, it can mean a lot to them.
- **AVOID "YES" AND "NO" QUESTIONS.** Open-ended questions are always the way to go for dynamic discussion.
- **AFFIRM RESPONSES FROM GROUP MEMBERS.** Lean forward in your seat to show engagement with their sharing. If needed, confirm their thoughts; use the following, "What I hear you saying is..."

- **BE FLEXIBLE.** Go with the flow of the discussion when issues come up that need to be discussed even though they are not scheduled.
- **WATCH OUT FOR TANGENTS.** Do not be afraid to use topics like, “Let’s refocus for just a minute and talk about this week’s topic.”