

Facilitation Skill Tips

Many HIV group interventions require the group leader to facilitate learning and group discussions. Some tips for effective facilitation are listed below.

Ask questions instead of making statements. “Who knows how HIV is transmitted?” instead of “HIV is transmitted from the exchange of semen, blood, vaginal secretions or breast milk.”

Ask open-ended instead of close-ended questions. “What are people thinking right now?” instead of “Are there any questions (a “yes” or “no” question)?”

Encourage participants to share their experiences. “Would somebody in the group be willing to share their experience in talking to their child about HIV prevention?”

Phrase a person’s question or statement in your own words. This does two things. First it helps you make sure you understood the question and second it buys you some time to think about how you will answer the question.

Use reflection and empathy. By reflecting or empathizing with people’s ideas, you show support and have an opportunity to clarify. “It sounds like you really enjoyed having that talk with your daughter.”

Generalize information. If several people talk about the amount of sexual content on television, the facilitator can ask, “So what can we say about television’s influence on our behavior, if anything?” Are we able to come up with a principle or lesson from what a participant(s) has said?

Help the group apply skills you practice in a workshop to real life. If you conduct a role-play about communication, ask the audience how a real-life situation would be different from the role-play. How could the skills and or information you learned tonight be used at home? This is a good way to close a workshop.

Do not be afraid of silence. Silence may mean that the group is thinking about what you asked. Some trainers believe that the facilitator should not break the silence until 11 seconds have passed.

Get the audience to make judgmental statements instead of you. If someone says, “I think people with HIV shouldn’t have sex.” Ask the audience, “What do the rest of you think about that?” More likely than not, someone will offer a different opinion and participants can have their own debate.

Use stories to illustrate points. Use a personal story, or a story from your community or another group to make a point. People relate well to stories. Remember to keep the CONFIDENTIALITY of the person about which you share a story.

Help the group interpret their statement. “What do you mean by...?” “So, is that a good thing or a bad thing?”