

FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS IN YOUR GROUP

Do's & Don'ts

DO'S

Use guiding comments such as:

- “That’s a good point.” Without overdoing it, genuinely acknowledge the idea.
- “Could you elaborate?” or “Tell me more about that.” If appropriate, paraphrase back what you “think” you heard and let them elaborate.
- “What do the rest of you think?” or “Who has a different point-of-view?” Engage other perspectives; generate healthy contention and a vigorous discussion.

Do maintain eye contact and keep engaged. Be Present. Demonstrate that you are listening.

Do manage a healthy level of conflict. Have people share and “own” their feelings on issues and about each other. Have them stress how they feel and are choosing to respond, rather than attacking and blaming another person.

Do let team members finish talking. Engage the rest of the group to not “talk over” each other.

Do let there be “dramatic pauses”. Wait at least several seconds for a response when you’ve asked for answers or discussion and no one is replying. Sometimes, they need time to formulate what they want to say.

Do take chances and risk your vulnerability. Actively and non-defensively seek feedback. Be courageous in exposing your challenges and confronting your fears. Take conflicts head-on dealing with them quickly and directly. Don’t avoid them, they will only fester.

Do take full accountability. When something’s not working the normal reaction is to blame participants, rationalize and justify. Own it - focus on what you are doing to contribute to the problem and what you can do differently to correct it.

Do BE IT - a role model for others to look to. Not a “perfect” model, rather a model of a fallible human being. The challenge is again, not to do it perfectly or “right”, rather do it wholeheartedly and make plenty of courageous mistakes. Demonstrate the capability of learning quickly and adapting, demonstrating responding in new, more productive ways.

DONT'S

Don’t talk too much or impose your ideas on the group. Remember that you are there to facilitate, not a lecture. As a rule, even when presenting, participants should be talking twice as much as you do. A good gauge is a facilitator speaks 30% of the time with the group taking the other 70% of the time.

Don’t try to be the “expert”. In fact, everyone respects the person who has the courage to say, “I don’t know the answer to that, but I will find out and get back to you”.

Don’t try to do it all alone, ask for help. It acknowledges that you are human too - that you don’t always have all the answers. You may be amazed at the expertise within your group. Let people get involved in the process. Think about roles like; time-keeper, prayer request recorder, social coordinator etc.

Don’t try to give the “right answer” try to ask the “right question”. Think of the group as a think tank, your job is to ask the question. Their own “right answer” will be infinitely more compelling and relevant than any that you could offer.

Don’t be a victim of time. Don’t make “time crunches” their problem. Avoid statements like “gotta rush”, “too much to do” and “we’re running out of time”. Adjust internally with your course corrections and externally have a “grace under pressure”.

Don’t end a group in a rush with loose ends hanging out. Participants' closing experiences cast a shadow back across the whole group meeting. A poor closing can diminish a wonderful group meeting. Participants need to walk away with a sense of completion. (endings need to be positive and compelling, relaxed and ahead of schedule, and relevant with a clear path forward).