

## TIPS FOR AN EFFICIENT GROUP DISCUSSION

### What is the group discussion?

The group discussion is a time for group members to share their thoughts and feelings after an activity. There are 3 steps in a group discussion:

- **Feel** – group members talk about how they liked the activity and the feelings they experienced
- **Think** – group members reflect on their behaviour (during the activity and in other situations) and make connections to human rights and human rights values
- **Act** – group members propose actions for incorporating these human rights and human rights values into their daily lives

### What is the purpose of the group discussion?

The group discussion encourages group members to think about what happened during the activity and to draw life lessons that they can then apply in other contexts. The group discussion gives group members the opportunity to discover – for themselves – the importance of human rights values. It also encourages them to propose ways applying their learning to their lives and community human rights projects. The group discussion encourages group members to fully participate by giving them the opportunity to exercise their right to express themselves and to be heard.

### Tips for facilitating a group discussion

- **Notice** when group members **want to speak** and gives them an opportunity to share their comments.
- **Draw out quiet group members** and creates a **safe place** where they can talk. Do not put anyone on the spot, but watch for opportunities to bring quite people into the discussion
- **Probe and pause.** After asking a question, try pausing for 5 seconds. This pause gives group members a chance to jump in and give their comments. Sometimes silence helps people build up the courage to speak
- **Let group members respond to one another.** Encourage interaction among the group. If questions or comments are directed at you, try to deflect them and pose the question back to group members
- **Keep the discussion on track.** Tell group members upfront that you will interrupt them if the discussion is going too far off topic
- **Summarize comments** before moving to the next question. This helps group members know that you are about to move on to the next question
- **Group members are the experts.** It is important to convey to group members the deep value of their opinions, knowledge and experience
- **Frequently repeat key phrases** from the question. Group members tend to lose focus on the question after 2-3 individuals have responded. Repeating key phrases from the questions will help group members stay focuses

- **Use probing questions** only if issues do not naturally surface. When group members are not providing enough information, try the following questions

Learning purpose	Socratic Questions
Clarifying Explanations	What do you mean by...? Provide an additional example of.... How does this compare and/or contrast to....? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of...?
Questioning Assumptions	What other explanations might account for this? What are the assumptions behind this statement?
Exploring Additional Evidence	How can we find out more about this topic? How does this connect to the concepts we've discussed previously? What additional evidence can you find to support or refute this idea?
Multiple Perspectives	What would someone who disagrees say? What are the cultural implications?
Real World Implications	What are potential consequences or implications of this? Provide a real world example of...

### What is the role of the facilitator in a group discussion?

As a facilitator, remember to...

- **Observe and be responsive** to the overall group dynamic
- **Summarize discussions** to make sure everyone understands and keep discussions going in the direction you want. If there are disagreements, draw conclusions
- **Paraphrase group members' statements** to check your understanding and reinforce statements
- **Ask questions that encourage reflective responses** such as open-ended questions
- **Not answer all questions yourself.** Group members can answer each other's questions
- **Ask group members if they agree** with a statement someone makes
- Be sure **group members talk** more than you do
- Create and **maintain a comfortable environment** for group members
- **Be a good listener**, to understand what is being said and to know when to ask probing questions that get group members to expand on or clarify their comments

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