

# Facilitation 101

The following are some useful facilitation tips when working with groups.

## Roles of Facilitator

- Promotes a safe space where youth feel welcome and included
- Guides group discussion
- Provides structure to the group
- Assesses needs within the group
- Manages conflict and communication among members
- Supports the group in solving problems
- Helps members recognize and appreciate their strengths and differences

## Helpful Facilitator Behaviours

- Spending time practicing
- Helping group members feel welcome
- Following an agenda
- Actively listening
- Enforcing group norms
- Paraphrasing what youth are saying
- Feeling calm and confident
- Summarizing discussion
- Encouraging participation and bringing people into the discussion
- Using humor appropriately
- Checking the pace and timing
- Asking questions
- Checking for understanding
- Showing flexibility

## Less Helpful Facilitator Behaviours

- Making assumptions
- Lecturing

- Interrupting
- Ignoring inappropriate comments or behavior
- Getting defensive
- Not providing resources
- Allowing people to dominate the group
- Putting people on the spot

## Preparing for a Group Session

Before any session, it's helpful to prepare by finding out as much as you can about the youth you'll be seeing. Some questions to ask could be:

### **What is the age range?**

The way you present information depends on what age or developmental stage you are with. Teen Talk's activities and curriculum were designed for youth age 14-18, but there are activities that can be adapted or used with younger or older groups. If your group is 14-18 years olds, try splitting them into two groups, 14-15 year olds and 16-18 year olds.

### **How many youth will there be?**

For Teen Talk activities, the "ideal" group size is between 10-25 youth. Larger groups can be difficult to interact with and run activities with. Likewise, if there are only a few youth it can be difficult to run certain activities.

### **Are there any issues specific to the group?**

This could include cognitive or developmental issues, language/literacy issues, and recent events facing youth such a loss or suicide in the community.

### **Which topic?**

Our advice is to choose one topic to focus on. People often want to share "everything they know" with a group, this can be overwhelming for youth and can leave them feeling confused. Try to stick to 2-4 key messages for your topic. For example, in the Teen Talk STI workshop our key messages are: how to prevent STIs (abstinence, condoms and sex dams), and where to get tested. Choose activities that teach your key messages.

### **How long should a session be?**

It depends on the topic, how many activities you choose, how much time you have with them, and especially the age and attention span of the youth.

### **What resources will the group need?**

When talking about dating violence, mental health or suicide it is essential to provide youth with local resources where they can go for help. At Teen Talk, we provide a resource sheet with local resources to leave with youth.

### **What will I do if there is a disclosure of abuse?**

Review your organization's policies to know what to do and where you can refer youth in the event of disclosures. For reporting protocols in Manitoba please see, *Reporting of Child Protection and Child Abuse: Handbook and Protocols for Manitoba Service Providers*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Will there be an adult present?**

If you have been asked to speak to a group, ideally the supervising teacher or staff person should also attend the session. This can help with group management and follow up (if the youth ask questions or have concerns afterwards).

## **Workshop Introduction**

How you introduce yourself and the topic sets the tone for the workshop or conversation. Below is the general format Teen Talk uses.

**Introduce yourself.** For example, Teen Talk would say, "Hi, my name is... We are here from Teen Talk. Teen Talk is a Youth Health Education Program based out of Klinik Community Health. What we do is talk to youth about birth control, STI, mental health, and relationships."

**Try not to make assumptions.** For example, "Today we are going to be talking about birth control. Even if you're not sexually active or aren't interested in the type of sex where pregnancy is possible (penis-vagina sex) we are here to provide everyone with accurate information about preventing pregnancy that people can use now or in the future for ourselves, or to help out friends or a partner."

**Mention confidentiality.** For example, “the only time we would share anything is if someone discloses something like abuse.” (You could give the youth a confidential feedback form at the end of the session where they write down their questions for you to answer.)

**Link youth to resources.** Youth-friendly health clinic, nursing station, Elders, school counsellors, websites, etc. Be sure to mention the location and hours, services accessible to youth, any costs, and whether it is drop-in or appointment only.

**Create ground rules.** For example, “We have two ground rules: respect and no put-downs. One way we can all show respect is to listen when someone else is speaking. We encourage participation: if someone has a question or comment, please share it with the group. We have “no put-downs” because if someone is laughed at or called names, then no one else will want to share.”

**Acknowledge the traditional Indigenous territory.** For example, “Part of respect for us is acknowledging The Land. Manitoba is Dene, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Ojibwe otherwise known as Anishanabe traditional territory. We are also in the heart of the Métis Nation. Now that Canada exists we are all part of treaty #\_\_. We are grateful to live, play and work on this land. Thank you for having us in your class/space.” Learning and acknowledging the Land shows respect for the youth and nations we are supporting. Asking Elders or local community members even searching the internet and taking the time to learn the history of these lands, demonstrates our commitment to allyship.

## Preparing a Resource Sheet

When presenting to a group, ideally you can hand out a resource sheet that lists some local places that youth can go for help and information. In preparing this sheet consider the following:

**Places to call:** People and places that offer respectful support or services to youth.

- Public health nurse and traditional medicine person
- Elders

- Mental health, suicide, addiction, and HIV workers
- Guidance counsellors
- Cultural or spiritual or religious advisors
- Crisis centers or phone lines

**Questions to consider asking:**

- Are the people who work there or run the program youth friendly? (accepting, non-judgmental and confidential).
- Location, hours or days of the week, appointments or drop-in?
- Do youth need parents' permission?
- What is available and is there a cost? (types of birth control, emergency contraception pill or “morning after pill”, pregnancy testing, STI/HIV testing, pregnancy counseling on all 3 options, abortion referrals, etc.)
- Anything else that is relevant to the youth in your community.

**Additional suggestions:**

- Some communities are close enough to larger centers that youth may be accessing services there as well, so try to include relevant info on the next biggest town.
- Make enough copies for the number of youth you will be seeing (any excess resource sheets can be posted up and left around where youth hang out, like the arena, drop in, school, etc.).

For a resource sheet template, please contact Teen Talk, 204.784.4010 or [serviceprovider@klinik.mb.ca](mailto:serviceprovider@klinik.mb.ca).

## **SAMPLE: Youth Resources in Your Community**

The Health Centre  
Monday to Friday 9 – 5 (204)

Public Health Nurses: List all those great people who work there

Free Condoms  
Help to get STI testing  
Help to get "Plan B"

Free Pregnancy Tests  
Help to get free birth control pills  
Free Counselling on all 3 pregnancy options

**Need to talk to someone? Call the 24-Hour Crisis Line  
1.888.332.3019**

## **Handing out Feedback Forms**

At the end of each session, the youth are given a form to provide us with feedback on the workshop. The form asks for their opinions, what they learned and any questions or comments they may have. The questions are answered in the subsequent session or via email if it's the last workshop. This form also gives Teen Talk insight into what knowledge the youth gained from the session. Teen Talk informs the youth that their comments are confidential but not anonymous. In the event of disclosure of abuse see *Reporting of Child Protection and Child Abuse: Handbook and Protocols for MB Service Providers*.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sample Feedback Form:**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

What did you think about the following? (Please circle):

Information:	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Presenters:	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Overall Workshop:	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good

What were the most important things you learned today?

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What would you add or change about the workshop and why?

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Comments or Questions:

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If this is your last workshop, we can email you an answer: E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

# Guidelines for Answering Questions about Sexuality<sup>3</sup>

Adapted from Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education

When answering anonymous questions about sexuality, keep in mind the development/maturity level, cultural background, and other visible or invisible diversity characteristics of the group. Also, do your best to identify the kind of question that is being asked and formulate your answer accordingly.

## Information Questions

- Be honest. If you don't know the answer, say so; find the answer and report it at the next session. It's also OK to acknowledge when a question is a bit embarrassing. Come across as a real human being.
- Answer questions age-appropriately for pre-adolescent children. Give simple, fairly concrete answers. Don't give too much, unnecessary information. Avoid technical jargon.
- If you aren't sure what a young person is asking, you might ask "What have you already heard about that?" or "Are you asking...?"
- Pre-and early adolescents ask a lot of "What happens" questions; for example, "What happens when you get your period?" Be sure to address both the physical changes as well as the emotional changes.
- After answering a question, ask, "Does that answer your question?" or "Tell me what you think I just said."

## "Am I Normal?" Questions

- These questions are typically disguised, so be on the lookout for them. Sometimes they are posed as general information questions or as "I have a friend who..." questions.
- Answer in a reassuring and comforting tone. Be sure to discuss the range of normal and individual differences.
- Never imply in a group setting that you've guessed that you're answering an "Am I normal?" question.

## Value-laden Questions

- Do not impose your own personal values on the group or be judgmental.
- Adhere to values of respect, responsibility and inclusion.
- When controversial issues come up, always discuss the range of values. If participants voice only one point of view, it's your role to bring up other points of view (including those that may be counter to your own point of view).
- When a value-laden question refers to something "my parents told me," be sensitive to those beliefs and be careful not to criticize them even if they are disrespectful. However, go on depersonalize and say, "While that is a commonly-held value, there are a range of values on that topic. For examples, others believe that..."
- Encourage young people to discuss values with important people in their lives such as family, teachers, and peers.

## Shock-value Questions

- The point of a shock-value question is to shock you, knock you off balance, or embarrass you. The goal is not to get real answer to a question. So you must become "unshockable." If you are unshockable, the questioner will eventually stop the behaviour because it is unsatisfying. Your ability to be unshockable will increase with experience.
- Feel free to identify shock-value questions for what they are without missing a beat...and then move on.
- Remember shocking questions are not always shock-value questions. What young people genuinely want to know about can sometimes be shocking to adults. Questions about explicit sexual behaviour can fall into this category and they deserve an honest answer.

## Questions about Explicit Sexual Behaviour

- Answer explicit questions in a simple, honest and sexuality-positive manner. The goal is to be straightforward and clear without being overly descriptive or provocative.

- Describe sexual behaviors in the context of respect, responsibility and inclusion.
- Avoid using language that conveys the idea that sex=sexual intercourse.

## General Guidelines

- Be accepting of questions. Convey the idea that all questions are OK to ask in whatever language young people already know. They may use slang or colloquial language because they do not know the scientific words. If they use slang you don't recognize, ask to be educated. Even if the question is anonymous, you can ask the group what the words mean. Use scientific language linked to the slang words in your answer. For example, "jacking off is another word for masturbation."
- Be aware that nonverbal communication can speak volumes; it can indicate delight and acceptance or distaste and disagreement. So watch what you say non-verbally—work to avoid nonverbal cues such as wrinkled brows or frowns that can indicate judgment, disapproval, etc.
- Turn "feeling" or opinion questions back to the group so that they can discuss their own ideas.
- Use the third person (people, folks, etc.) rather than the pronoun "you" when answering very personalized questions (from the question box) in a group setting.
- Use inclusive language, e.g. speak in gender neutral and sexual orientation neutral terms as much as possible. Use terms like partner, person, someone rather than girlfriend, boyfriend, man, woman, etc. Avoid answers that are sexist and heterosexist.
- Keep the question box alive. Don't forget about it because it's an excellent tool for making sure you address what pre-adolescent children really want to know.
- Don't forget the "music." The emotional content of your answer is as important as the informational content.

## Impact of Trauma and Trauma Exposure Response on Service Providers

Anyone can experience trauma or trauma exposure response, including service providers. Trauma is a person's experience of an unexpected event (or events) that they were unprepared for and have no control over. Trauma exposure response is when others become “secondary victims” when they hear about or bear witness to potentially traumatic events from others. Trauma or trauma exposure can impact the way we see the world, our sense of safety and independence, our self-esteem, and intimacy with others.

Trauma and/or trauma exposure can be a significant issue and, left unresolved can make it harder to be present and engaged with youth. However, healing from trauma and/or trauma exposure is also possible. Organizations and service providers can help by being aware of potential negative impacts and by taking steps to address them.

At the organizational level, protocols that acknowledge trauma and trauma exposure, support debriefing and promote staff wellness, can help. At the personal level, we can practice self-compassion and awareness. We can acknowledge when we feel overwhelmed, and ask for help or get support when we need to. We can try to find ways that help us restore balance or cope.

*“You hear a lot of horrible stories that you cannot disregard, even with the professional training you get. I was taught many cleansing ceremonies by Elders. I made a ceremony on my own by mixing them together. It’s a meditation where you let in the light of the people that have come before us, knowing that our ancestors are there to guide us:*

*Close your eyes: I imagine the kind of day where the sun is bright behind the clouds. I imagine the clouds opening up and a very bright light coming down and in through to the crown of my head. The light represents the wisdom of the ancestors and it helps to suck out the thoughts of something or someone that has caused trauma in your life, almost like a vacuum.*

*Now, imagine the light vacuuming the thought out through the crown of the head and up into the clouds. Let the clouds close up now, taking the horrible thought with it.*

*Finally, let the light enter the crown of your head and into the body, permeating every inch of the inside of your body, bit by bit. Follow with 5 deep breathes.*

*It was hard at first, since I felt I owned the trauma, therefore, I had to do it over and over, but it works for me and the more I do it the easier it gets.*

*The mind is a very powerful tool.”*

*Daphne Lafreniere, Cree/Métis, Support Worker for Survivors of Residential Schools, Opaskwayak Cree Nation*

For more on managing trauma and trauma exposure response, refer to the Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre.<sup>4</sup>

## Thinking Beyond Presentations and Workshops

Contributed and adapted from Jessica Danforth

Holding a workshop is great and there are many other less structured activities that can teach sexual and mental health and relationship information.

**Being present at community activities:** These could be events organized by us or may already be happening. Have a table with resources or create an event like the HIV/AIDS walks.

**Have kitchen table conversations/ home gatherings:** Smaller gatherings can help open up casual discussions. You can organize evening get-togethers, lunches, condom activities etc. It is important to invite community youth, and have “open hours” outside of session times.

**Have ways for quiet groups to participate:** Group brainstorms work great with some groups, but having more options always helps. Examples can be passing out post-it notes for youth to write on, having smaller groups work on a flipchart, sitting in a circle, giving youth paper to draw how they are feeling, etc.

**Include coming of age ceremonies:** Incorporate traditions, community, and teachings with HIV and sexual health education. Involve youth during their transition from youth to adulthood while teaching them to be strong and healthy.

**Incorporate activities:** For example, beading, moccasin making, birch bark baskets/biting, cedar weaving or carving, rattle making, and more. These activities can motivate people to be a part of the discussion and may be good evening activities.

**Encourage questions:** Try an anonymous question box, hand out evaluations, be open and available, admit what you don't know, and make an effort to find out.

**Include art-based activities:** For example, fashion shows, incorporating art and poster making, newsletters, 'zines, and comic strips.

**Incorporate cultural practices:** For example, inviting Elders to open the session, and/or to participate of observe sessions and activities, inviting drummers to open and/or close the day(s), and inviting local singers.

**Remember to use humor and make it fun!**

# Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cpmb.ca/documents/Reporting\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.cpmb.ca/documents/Reporting_Handbook.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, P.M. (2014). Our Whole Lives. *Sexuality Education for Grades 7-9*. Second Edition.

<sup>4</sup> [www.trauma-informed.ca](http://www.trauma-informed.ca).