

Preparing for a 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?

How information is presented depends on the age and developmental stage of the youth. Teen Talk's activities and curriculum are 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 aged 14-18, try splitting them into two groups, one younger, age 14-15 and one older, age 16-18.

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 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, sports tournaments or a festival/big event. Knowing the Treaty territory, community history, Original Language spoken and impacts of resource extraction (like mining and hydro) is helpful in First Nation communities.

Which topic?

Choose one topic to focus on. People often want to share "everything they know" and this can be overwhelming. Stick to 2-4 key messages. For example, in the STI workshop key messages on how to prevent STI are abstinence, condoms/sex dams and testing. 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 most significantly the age and attention span of the youth. Teen Talk sessions run from an hour to two with breaks when needed.

What resources will the group need?

When talking about relationships, mental health or suicide it is essential to provide youth with local resources where they can go for help if needed. At

Teen Talk, we provide a resource sheet with local resources to each youth.

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

Review your organization's policies and understand beforehand where you can refer youth in the event of disclosures. For reporting protocols in Manitoba see, *Reporting of Child Protection & Child Abuse: Handbook & Protocols for Manitoba Service Providers*.¹

Will there be an adult present?

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

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 outline
- Actively listening
- Enforcing group norms
- Paraphrasing what youth are saying and summarizing

¹www.cpmb.ca/documents/Reporting_Handbook.pdf, accessed February 2018.

- Feeling calm and confident
- 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 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 an adult's permission?
- What is available and is there a cost? (types of birth control, emergency contraception pill, pregnancy testing, STI/HIV testing, pregnancy counseling on all 3 options, abortion referrals, etc.)
- Anything else you think 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 extra resource sheets can be posted up and left around where youth hang out, like the arena, drop in, school, etc.).
- Leave leftover resource sheets in community places such as rec centre, health centre, guidance counselor office, airport, grocery store.

For a resource sheet template, contact Teen Talk, 204.784.4010 or serviceprovider@teentalk.ca. For the Teen Talk resource sheet, see teentalk.ca/service-providers/handouts-and-youth-resources/.

Impact of Trauma & Trauma Exposure Response on Service Providers

Part of preparing for a session is realizing that we all can be impacted negatively by this work. Anyone can experience trauma or trauma exposure response, including service providers. Trauma is a person's experience of an event/s or set of circumstances that have lasting adverse effects, e.g. accidents, loss, abuse, colonial processes.² 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 engage with youth. However, healing from trauma and/or trauma exposure is also possible.

²www.cardeaservices.org/resourcecenter/guide-to-trauma-informed-sex-education, accessed May 2018.

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.

For more on managing trauma and trauma exposure response, refer to the Manitoba Trauma Information & Education Centre.³

“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*

³www.trauma-informed.ca, accessed February 2018.

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. What we do is talk to youth about sexuality, STI/HIV, mental health, and relationships.”

Try not to make assumptions. For example, in an STI workshop, Teen Talk would say, “We are not assuming that everyone has an STI, has had sex or is even interested in having sex. We are also not assuming that no one has. We give the same up-to-date, accurate information everywhere we go. It’s okay, if you do not think this information will be useful to you. All we ask is that you give other people a chance to hear what we have to say.”

Mention confidentiality. For example, “the only time we would share anything with someone else is if we are concerned someone could be hurt. Then we have follow-up to make sure everyone is safe.” (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 and let them know it is confidential.)

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

Create group norms. In each session Teen Talk mentions, “Our one main group norm is “respect.” We come here with a lot of respect for all of you and we ask that you show respect to the topic, to us and to each other. One way we can all show respect is to listen when someone else is speaking. We love participation but everyone gets to decide how they participate. This means you have the right to pass if you want. If someone has a question or comment, please share it with the group. Respect also means no put-downs because we want to create a safer space and if someone is laughed at or called names, then no one else will want to share.”

Acknowledge the Indigenous territory. 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. For example, “Part of respect for us is acknowledging The Land. Manitoba is Sayisi 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.” (For an Anishinaabe Land Acknowledgment, see “Land is Body, Body is Land,” in the Youth Sexuality chapter.)