

## 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?**

How information is presented depends on the youth's age and developmental stage. The activities and curriculum in this binder are split into different age groups to meet developmental needs. Younger age groups focus on less information and more movement activities, while older age groups hold more complex and abstract concepts. Remember to adjust your language to meet the needs of the group.

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

For Teen Talk activities, the 'ideal' group size is 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 as 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 STIs workshop, key messages on how to prevent STIs 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 hours, 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 each youth a resource sheet with local resources.

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

Canadian laws obligate us to follow a duty to report process. 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*.<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 will attend the session. This can help with group management and follow-up (if the youth ask questions or have concerns afterwards).

## **Teen Talk's Operating Principles**

Operating principles are the foundation of how we work with youth at Teen Talk and are meant to be fundamental and relevant across our program. Some are core values, like pro-choice, feminist, sex positive, 2STLGBQ+ positive and using an anti-oppression, decolonizing lens. Others speak to the tools and strategies we use, like being youth-friendly and strengths-based, and using a harm reduction approach. These are the promising practices we use. We encourage other service providers to become familiar with them by reviewing the introductory chapter of the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual or visiting <https://teentalk.ca/op/>

## **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
- Feeling calm and confident
- Encouraging participation and bringing people into the discussion
- Using humour 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 behaviour
- 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 youth can go to 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 centres 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, STIs/HIV testing, pregnancy counselling 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 centres 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 spaces such as rec centres, health centres, guidance counsellor offices, airports, grocery stores.

For a resource sheet template, contact Teen Talk, 204.982.7800 or [info@serc.mb.ca](mailto:info@serc.mb.ca). For the Teen Talk resource sheet, see [www.teentalk.ca/service-providers/handouts-and-youth-resources](http://www.teentalk.ca/service-providers/handouts-and-youth-resources).

## **Impact of Trauma & 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 event(s) or set of

circumstances that have lasting adverse effects, e.g., accidents, loss, abuse, colonial processes.<sup>ii</sup> 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. 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 breaths.*

*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 & Education Centre.<sup>iii</sup>

## **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, STIs/HIV, mental health, and relationships."

**Try not to make assumptions.** For example, in an STIs 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 to 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, “During our time together, we want to create a safer space to talk about these things openly, so we have some group norms for all of us to follow. We each have the right to

- Expect privacy
- Participate
- Pass
- Ask questions
- Not be put down
- Have fun”

**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, and 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 Anishinaabe 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.)



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<sup>i</sup>Manitoba, & PACCA. (2013). *Reporting of child protection and child abuse: Handbook protocols for Manitoba service providers* (pp. 1–152). Manitoba.

<sup>ii</sup>Cardea. (2016). *Guide to trauma-informed sex education* (pp. 1–22).

<sup>iii</sup>Manitoba Trauma Information Centre. (n.d.). *Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre*. The Manitoba Trauma Information Centre. Retrieved August 23, 2021, from <http://trauma-informed.ca/>