

Group Guidelines

It is helpful in the beginning of a new group or workshop for the facilitators to discuss some standards that they want the group to follow. This alleviates part of the members' anxiety of not knowing what to expect or what the rules are to be in the group. A facilitator may wish to negotiate the rules, or may choose to say that some items are non-negotiable. The group may want to add some guidelines. The suggested guidelines are as follows:

1. Attend all sessions (if in a residential workshop, eat and sleep on the conference site).
2. Keep confidentiality: you may share your own experiences, but do not discuss what another person said or did in any way that others may be able to identify her.
3. Participation in a given exercise is voluntary.
4. Start on time and end on time.
5. Focus on the here and now: e.g., say what you are feeling in this group now; do not spend a long time talking about how you felt five years ago.
6. Make personal statements: use "I" messages (not, "we all are feeling bored" rather, "I am feeling bored").
7. If you have something to say to a person, talk to them directly (not, "I find Susan to be an intelligent woman," instead, "Susan, I think you are very intelligent, especially the way you are able to...").
8. State your feelings and thoughts directly: do not phrase your feelings in the form of a question (not, "I wonder why we started late" instead, "I get upset when the group does not start on time").
9. Try not to generalize about human nature.
10. Take responsibility for yourself and your feelings. If you are feeling bored by what is happening in the group, share this feeling and try to change what the group is doing.
11. Do not moralize or give advice. You can clarify options and make suggestions.

Evaluation

Facilitators have various opinions about formal evaluation. On the one hand, facilitators will receive informal feedback from participants. It takes such forms as how interested, excited, or involved members seem to be, what members say after the meeting to the facilitator, to each other, and to outsiders; and whether they do or do not come back again. On the other hand, the feedback may not be clear unless there is a more formal evaluation process. Reasons for success or failure in the group can help you know what to include or change the next time. Some possible areas to examine:

1. Were the objectives of the exercise/workshop achieved?
2. Were the personal objectives of the participants achieved?
3. What learnings were obtained?
4. What new skills were gained?
5. What did the facilitators do that was helpful/unhelpful?
6. What are participants feeling about the experience?