

Facilitation Tips and Strategies for the STEP UP Training

With any training or presentation, preparation is key to success. This section on facilitation skills looks at a number of strategies and tips that may be helpful in preparing for your program. We encourage you to read through the following as part of your preparation.

- Four Cornerstones
- General Facilitation Guidelines
- Facilitating Large Group Discussions
- Facilitating Interactive Exercises
- Working with Difficult Audience Members

Four Cornerstones

One way to prepare is to think about the Four Cornerstones:

- Know Yourself
 - What's your style, skills, strengths, and weaknesses
- Know Your Material
 - Content: Practice makes perfect! One guideline is to spend at least twice the training time practicing/reviewing. For example, for a three-hour training, set aside at least six hours for preparation.
 - Research: Know your sources in addition to your facts.
 - Resources: Where can your audience learn more and gain additional information?
- Know Your Purpose
 - Why are you holding this training?
 - Do you want to...provide information? Change attitudes? Build new skills?
- Know Your Audience
 - What makes them who they are and why they are here? (i.e., affiliations, knowledge base, demographics, purpose for attending, perceptions)

General Facilitation Guidelines

There are several things you can do to make sure the interaction between you and your audience is as productive as possible. Here are some things for you to consider:

1. Be Prepared

In order to make things go as smoothly as possible, spend time before the program begins to review the program and become familiar with what you are about to teach. Make sure you know the content of each PowerPoint slide and when to advance to the next one. Prior to the training, become familiar with the videos (content, key phrases, timing) and collect all the items you need for the interactive exercises. Plan in advance for how much time you are allowing for each section so the training does not run too long or too short. If you have a co-trainer, decide beforehand who is teaching what section so the transitions are smooth. The best way to be prepared is to utilize the next facilitation skill.

2. Take Time To Practice

One of the critical elements to the success of this program is how much you “make the program your own.” By that we mean if you end up reading a script or notes, your participants will feel distance and unengaged. Does that mean you need to memorize everything? Not at all! But it is a good idea to know the key points and to have index cards with the key points with you so you can keep the training moving and not miss any valuable information.

We highly recommend that you practice the program at least once in front of a supportive audience who can give you constructive feedback. This is also a time for you to personalize it and put it into your

own words – altering the notes so they sound more like the way you would say it. Practicing the program at least once and receiving good feedback for improvements from a supportive audience will help you accomplish the third facilitation tip.

3. Be Confident

If you are prepared and teach the program with confidence, the program will go smoothly. Your audience will trust you because you trust yourself. Answer questions with confidence, even when your answer is “I don’t know.”

4. Watch Your Time

Any time you have a program with discussion and interactive exercises, one key job as the facilitator is managing the time. There are many different components to the training; know in advance how long each section takes so you can stay on track. If a certain topic sparks a lot of discussion, be prepared to respectfully cut the discussion short. For example, you can say, “This is great; it is what I hoped would happen! But in order to respect your time for the training, we need to put closure on this and move to the next section.”

5. Every Audience is Different

Be open to the fact that every audience will have a different personality. You will conduct the program one time and it will seem like everyone was really into it and discussion went great. The next time, perhaps no one wants to talk. Much of this you cannot control (see the section on “Dealing With Difficult Audiences”). If you are well prepared, you need to trust that people are hearing the information, even if they do not respond. You also need to be open to the fact that you will have great teaching days, while other days you may not be as effective as you wanted to be. This happens to all of us.

6. Programs Need Strong Openings and Closing

Think of the programs you have attended that you really remember. Most likely those programs had a strong opening that caught your attention and got you interested and involved. It probably also had a strong closing because it is often what we are left with at the end that sticks in our mind. Your program presentation needs to do this as well. Your audience needs to hear your passion and conviction when you tell them that they have the power to create a healthy and safe campus and to intervene in safe, effective ways to make a difference in the lives of friends and peers.

Facilitating Large Group Discussions

Because the STEP UP Bystander Intervention training consists of giving information or showing a video clip to participants and then asking for feedback, you will have to facilitate large group discussions. Here are some tips and strategies that will help:

1. Get Everyone Involved

Involvement of all participants is a sign of a successful program. Gain a sense of who is talking and try to spread the discussion around so many different people can give their points of view. Some audience members may be reluctant to raise their hands or offer opinions when you ask a question of the whole group. Ways to involve them include asking participants to write down their thoughts or answers anonymously or splitting the larger group into small groups to brainstorm answers. The small group responses can be recorded on chart paper and posted on the wall.

2. Ask Open-Ended Questions

When you pose a question to the audience, make it “open-ended.” This means that the question cannot be answered with a yes, no or other one-word answers. Do this by beginning the question with words such as “what” or “how.” For example: “What did you think about that?” or “What are your thoughts on

that point?” If a person does give you a short answer, such as, “I agree,” you can always follow-up with another question or open-ended statement, such as “Tell me more” or “What parts did you agree with?”

3. Let Your Audience Figure It Out

As you ask questions of your audience, you may get answers that are incorrect or not the one need to make the point. When that happens, you will want to correct the information and let the audience know the right answer. If possible, try to wait before making this correction. Continue to question the audience. Ask if there are other opinions or if someone else has a different idea and try to work your way to the right answer. It is always more constructive if your audience figures it out on their own.

4. Know What To Expect From Your Audience

There will be times in the program where your audience will be skeptical of the information you are offering, or there may be topics where your audience may question the strategies you are proposing. Be prepared and have a response. You can refer participants to books or articles for additional information or offer to check with a health, safety, or other professional on your campus and get back to them. As you present the training more often and experience these moments, take notes for how to respond the next time a similar situation arises.

5. Be Patient

Whenever you are working with an audience and want to engage them in discussion, there may be times when you ask a question and no one responds or only one person is willing to offer an opinion. This is normal. You may have the urge to quickly give the answer or go to the next section. Try to resist this temptation and be patient. Allow people time to think about the question. When there is silence in the program, sometimes 15-seconds feels like two minutes to a facilitator. It is okay if there are periods of silence.

6. Know When It Is Time To Move On

Contrary to the last facilitation strategy, there are times when you need to make the decision to move on to the next section. This can happen either when no one is talking or when the discussion is going on too long. When that takes place, try to reach a good stopping point and tell the audience that, because of time constraints, you are going to move to the next section.

Facilitating Interactive Exercises

In the STEP UP Bystander training there are several interactive exercises that help generate discussion with the audience. These small group discussions and activities include icebreakers, brainstorming, and skill building activities. When doing these activities, there are a few things to keep in mind.

1. Provide Clear Instructions

When you are setting up an icebreaker or giving the group a small group task (such as the role plays) it is helpful to have clear instructions.

Before you ask people to get up and move, plan exactly what you want the group to do. Walk through the activity while they are still sitting. It is usually hard to gain people’s attention once they are moving around. Ask if everyone understands the directions or has any questions. It is a common occurrence that, even though you thought you explained it very well, some people may be unclear as to what they are supposed to do. Once you feel everyone knows what they are supposed to do, proceed with the activity. It might be helpful to have the instructions written on a piece of flipchart paper.

2. Set Up In Advance

Time is very critical when facilitating a training. It is important to keep yourself and your audience on schedule. When you have an exercise that needs materials or other items make sure these things are set up before the training begins. If you are going to ask small groups to brainstorm ideas and write them out on chart paper, make sure you have the paper and markers prepared in advance.

3. Do Not Critique A Brainstorm and Do Follow Up When Done

A great facilitation technique used in CPE is to have the group brainstorm ideas or concepts. Brainstorming is a way to get your audience to think about the possibilities and come up with their own conclusions. When you collect answers from the group as part of their brainstorm, take each answer as it comes, even if it is one that you think does not belong on the list. Do not critique anyone's response or describe in detail why the idea was good or bad. In the beginning, just ask everyone to contribute as much as possible.

4. Encourage People to Work Together

Sometimes when an exercise involves people splitting into small groups or working with a partner, there may be people who would rather not participate. You may see this happening in a small group or you may see a set of partners that is not doing the task. Do not be afraid to eavesdrop or sit in on the group if you see this happening. Sometimes your presence is enough for them to begin participating. If that does not work, ask them if they need clarification on what they are supposed to do and encourage them to complete the task. They still might not do it, but at least you have made every effort as a facilitator.

Working With Difficult Audience Members

As anyone who has ever conducted a program will tell you, every now and then you run into a difficult audience member. These people can be a little disruptive or very disruptive, depending on their actions. However, you can limit how they affect your program based on your actions. Here are a few examples of the types of difficult audience members you might run into, along with a few suggestions for how you can respond.

1. The Person Who Talks A Lot

Occasionally, you may have an audience member who seems to make a comment about every issue and will offer an answer to every question. There might be several reasons for this. Maybe the person is just an extrovert who, every time he or she gets a thought, feels a need to share their comment. Maybe it is a person who is seeking attention. Sometimes it is a person who wants you to know that he or she is really informed on this issue. These people may want to impress you or may feel they know more than you.

The key to dealing with this type of audience member is to understand their motivation. Often times the reason they are talking so much is that they are excited about the program. This is a positive thing. Usually you can limit the distraction this person may cause simply by not calling on them for a while, or telling them in a positive way that you would like to get some other people more involved. If the person's motivation is to point out that they should be presenting the program rather than you, try this: during one of the interactive exercises, simply pull that person aside and tell them that you are aware they have a lot of knowledge, but that this program is for the people who are not as informed as they are. Ask them to comment less and tell them you are not going to call on them as much. Hopefully the person will feel they have gotten their point across to you and will be less disruptive.

2. The Person Who Does Not Want To Participate

It is not uncommon to be conducting a program and have one or two audience members who do not want to be there. This is especially true when you are doing your program for a mandatory audience.

We see this behavior in a number of ways: sometimes it is direct refusal to get involved; they may continue to listen to their MP3 player; they may do homework; or they may check phone messages or play games on their cell phone. Sometimes we see the unwillingness to participate in more subtle ways: the person will not join the icebreaker exercise or refuses to get involved in the small group or partner exercise.

While it is understandable that some people may be upset about having to attend a mandatory program, especially if they feel forced to do so, you have the right as the facilitator to ask them to get involved. Ignoring the issue does not serve you; it gives them the sense that what they are doing is okay. It also tells other audience members that they do not have to be involved either.

In this situation your confidence level is key. You are conducting a beneficial and important training. You have the right to ask people to be involved. You are allowed to request that people put their phones, books, and music away. Directly ask for the person to get involved. The person may not comply, but you have the right to ask.

3. The Person Who Makes Inappropriate Comments

Occasionally in a program you will have a person who will make inappropriate comments. These comments may range from swearing, to making racist/sexist/homophobic comments, to insulting other audience members or campus staff. While you can try to make this a teachable moment by responding that you do not believe their comment is true or fair, the key is to stop the comments from continuing. Sometimes we have the tendency to ignore what was said in hopes that it will not happen again. Ignoring what happened is not in your best interest. It might empower the person to continue making inappropriate comments to see what they can get away with. Even if it does not, the rest of the audience will have heard what was said and will be surprised that you as a facilitator did not confront the behavior.

Once again, the key is to try to understand the disruptive participant's motivation. Sometimes the person is not aware that what they said is offensive or hurtful. A gentle challenge from you will do the trick and also help them to understand what is appropriate and what is not. Other times the audience member is hurtful deliberately and your confrontation needs to be a little more direct. Remind the participants of the program ground rules that they agreed to earlier: respect everyone's opinion and disagree respectfully. Tell the participant who is making inappropriate comments that you recognize his or her right to an opinion but that you respectfully disagree and why you disagree. If the person continues to say hurtful things, take him or her aside during one of the group activities and ask them to make a choice: stay and listen with an open mind or leave if they will not be able to participate in a positive manner.

4. The Person Who Challenges Everything You Say

When you have an audience member who seems to challenge everything you say, start by being confident in your facts. Tell the person why what you said is true and where the information was found. Give them the right to disagree or not believe you, but be clear that you are speaking from a standpoint of reliable information. If the person continues to challenge you as wrong, let the person know that you would be happy to discuss these items after the training is completed. Offer the name and phone number of a staff member (with their permission) who can verify the information. You want to avoid having the training turn into a dialogue between just the two of you, as this will affect the other participants and completing the program in the time allotted.