

Guidelines and Brief Interventions for
Facilitating Group Process
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1. Learn to use silence, and to restrain group reactions during intense, emotional experiences.
2. When a member is talking about another member, instruct them to speak to members, not about them.
3. Only one member should speak at a time.
4. If a member tends to look at you when he or she speaks, simply say, "Talk to the group, okay?"
5. Advice is the cheapest form of human communication, and speaking from one's experience is the most valuable. So whenever a member gives advice, intervene and ask him to talk about his experience regarding the situation.
6. Generally, ask open-ended questions, and avoid any question that has a yes or no answer.
7. Avoid "Why?" and "What do you think?" and instead use "How come?" which conveys the larger question, "How (did you) come (to that conclusion)?"
8. When a member is talking a lot about someone who is not in the group, intervene by saying, "He isn't here and he isn't in our group. I really want to know more about you ." Or you can say, "Can you please tell us how you figure into this?"
9. When a person is asking a lot of questions, say "Please make a statement."
10. When a member uses "you" and "we" in an attempt to speak generally, intervene by saying, "Please use 'I'."
11. When a member attempts to represent other members of the group by saying, "We..." or "All of us..." intervene by saying, "Please speak for yourself. The other group members may feel differently."
12. Make observations of body language and repeated behaviors, but refrain from interpreting the behaviors. Once you've made your observation, ask the person, "Can you tell us the feelings behind this behavior?" Once the member has responded, let the group respond as well (facilitate group process). This is a very useful formula: Observation , Open-ended Inquiry , Member Response , and Facilitation of Group Process -- OIRF.

13. Good questions to ask members are:

“What are you aware of?”

“Are you aware of how you are...(some behavior that seems chronic or meaningful)?”

“What are you feeling right now?”

“What do you want to say to...(another member, a person outside the group, or the leader)?”

“What would you like to ask... (another member, a person outside the group, or the leader) ?”

“What is your fantasy about... (another member, a person outside the group, or the leader) ?”

“What do you want?”

“What do you want from... (another member, a person outside the group, or the leader) ?”

14. When you are in doubt, or even feeling uncomfortable about what’s happening in the group, sit quietly and get in touch with your feelings. Try to ascertain if it’s “your stuff that you need to keep private, or a valid reaction to what’s happening in the group. If you conclude that it’s about the group process, then it’s okay to say, “I’m unsure about what’s happening right now,” or “I feel a lot of tension here, and I’m wondering if I’m all alone in feeling this way.”

15. A great question to pose to the group is, “What do you think is going on in our group right now?” and have everyone respond before you make an assessment.

16. Learn to use “structure statements” to provide a succinct of what has just happened of significance, or a perspective that may be useful for the group members to adopt. (See handout on Structure Statements.)