

## The Intervention Initiative

# Good Facilitation – Discussion Tips for Facilitators

### Ground Rules – set at first session and remind every session

Ask the students themselves what they need from you and from each other in order to feel safe talking about abuse and sexual coercion. For example, do they require confidentiality, or do they need the right to refuse to participate? Develop ground rules together and make sure that these include:

- Confidentiality – experiences shared by participants in the room are not to be shared outside. Explain that you will never put anyone 'on the spot' by asking people to share experiences they don't want to share.
- Appropriate language – while discussion is welcome, language that is racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise offensive or biased is not acceptable and should be challenged. There will be some discussion of offensive language as a topic in some sessions.
- Attendance – a shared expectation for timely attendance at each session.
- Leaving the room – it is important for everyone to recognise there will be discussion of some sensitive areas and some people in the room will have had personal experience with some of the issues. Needing to leave the room is ok – if anyone needs to leave the room for a reason other than what is being discussed in the session (e.g. to visit the bathroom), please make sure to let the facilitator or the person next to you know. If someone needs to leave the room because of the content of the session, the facilitator will want to be able to find them afterwards to check how they are feeling and that they have appropriate support – please ask students contact the facilitator in private after the session.

To foster open discussion, remind everyone of the ground rules before you begin each session and before each discussion exercise.

### Defusing difficult situations

- Foster a calm environment by modelling calm behaviour.
- If someone is dominating the discussion, summarise back to them what they have said and explain that you would now like to hear what others have to say.
- If a person seems hostile or antagonistic, do not respond with negativity but repeat back to them what they have said - they may feel that their opinions are not being listened to. Then ask if they can frame their views in a positive way that will move the discussion forward. Remind the group that it is fine to challenge ideas or opinions but not to be personal or to try to 'win' arguments.

### Diversity

When dividing students for group exercises, aim to create groups that have an inclusive mix of students from different backgrounds / identities. This encourages open conversation and dialogue. Some exercises however might be better completed in single sex groups if this is possible or appropriate.

# Good Facilitation – Resources

In addition to the resources available in your University library and any courses that your University may run, there are resources available on the web and here are some recommendations:

Unicef have published a handbook containing a large number of exercises including icebreakers, tips on role play and exercises addressing gender analysis. These exercises are all suitable for use with cross-cultural communities.

[http://www.unssc.org/home/sites/unssc.org/files/games\\_and\\_exercises.pdf](http://www.unssc.org/home/sites/unssc.org/files/games_and_exercises.pdf)

Seeds for Change have published a summary of tools for meetings and workshops with ideas for icebreakers, building trust, tackling issues, encouraging participation and resolving conflict. The briefing document is available to read online or to download as a pdf.

<http://seedsforchange.org.uk/tools>

The Open University have published a video album following two experienced facilitators as they run a two-day course on problem-solving:

<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/money-management/management/facilitating-creative-thinking?track=38dc5f7cca>

Oregon State Library have published a facilitation skills toolkit created by the Oregon Department of Administrative Services Training Division which includes tips for handling difficult situations:

[http://library.state.or.us/services/training/DAS\\_Training\\_Materials/Files/EffectiveMeetingsPart2FacilitationSkillsToolKit.pdf](http://library.state.or.us/services/training/DAS_Training_Materials/Files/EffectiveMeetingsPart2FacilitationSkillsToolKit.pdf)

