



Crash Course in Student Group Facilitation *for After-School Programs*

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Workshop Goal & Objectives

- To provide you with an **introduction** to the skills, knowledge and experience required to implement and facilitate a student support/life skills group
 - Develop an understanding of various techniques appropriate for support/life skills groups
 - Learn and practice techniques necessary to effectively facilitate communication within a group setting



Overview of Our Time Together

- Types of groups
- Setting agreements/norms
- Facilitation skills
- Strategies to engage youth
- Practice



Group Norms/Guidelines

- Must be established during the first group session- it sets the tone for your group!
- It is a GROUP process- participants decide what the agreements are.
- Chart ALL ideas, recommendations, suggestions.
- Consolidate into 3-4 categories or main agreements if possible.



Group Norms/Guidelines

- Post in room or carry with you in a sheet protector
- For open groups: review guidelines each time there is a new member and ask them to agree to rule of confidentiality





Group Norms- Sample

- Respect
 - *No cell phones, no side conversations, show up on time*
- Share your own story
 - *Only talk about yourself, your own issues*
- No judgment
- Confidentiality



Types of Groups

- Counseling Groups
- Support Groups
- 12-Step Groups
- Life Skills / Educational Groups
 - Empowerment / Self-esteem Groups
 - Career Readiness
 - Decision-making
 - Communication
 - Diversity
 - Relationships

Types of Groups- *Similarities*

Counseling/Therapy Groups	Support Groups	12-Step Groups
Increase self-awareness	Increase self-awareness	Increase self-awareness
Opportunity to share	Opportunity to share	Opportunity to share
Self-disclosure	Self-disclosure	Self-disclosure
Reinforce accomplishments	Reinforce accomplishments	Reinforce accomplishments
Appropriate to refer out	Appropriate to refer out	Appropriate to refer out

Source: SDCOE Ready to Learn, Facilitator Training for Integrated Student Support Services

Types of Groups- *Differences*

Counseling/Therapy Groups	Support Groups	12-Step Groups
Goal: Development of interpersonal skills; to affect behavioral change Facilitator: Trained counselor, therapist, or psychologist Composition: Individuals are not functioning or coping well- dysfunctional or "diagnosed" behavior Problem areas are explored in-depth for each group member Work on issue and feelings that the person is aware of and also those which they are not aware of Works for improving behavior that is diagnosed Some education and teaching takes place	Goal: Personal awareness fulfillment or potential (feelings, identify protective system, defenses); support growth when it happens Facilitator: Trained non-credentialed co-facilitators Composition: "Well-functioning individuals"; issues that may need to be explored for feedback and support Right to pass Does not attempt to discover unconscious feelings Looks for awareness, feelings, and defenses Some education and teaching takes place	Goal: Awareness and support for behavior changes through 12 steps Facilitator: 12-step members Composition: Individuals affected by chemical dependency (family member, friend, other) Right to pass Does not attempt to discover unconscious feelings Support through 12 steps Uses 12 steps to support growth when it happens Some education and teaching takes place

Source: Adapted SDCOE Ready to Learn, Facilitator Training for Integrated Student Support Services

Counseling Groups	Support Groups	Life Skills Groups
Closed group	Closed group	Closed OR open group
One grade level or combined levels (consider emotional maturity/ behavior/ focus of attention)	One grade level or combined levels (consider emotional maturity/ behavior/ focus of attention)	6-10 students (12 students if co-facilitator is present)
4-6 students	6-8 students	Meets 6-10 weeks
Co-facilitator a plus not a must	Co-facilitator a plus not a must	Limited components of support group model
Facilitator does not disclose	Facilitator(s) may or may not disclose	Facilitator discloses (with good judgment)
Meets for 10-12 weeks	Meets for 10-12 weeks	Education takes place with actionable practice
Problem areas explored in depth	Problem areas not explored in depth	Goal is to increase knowledge in specific area (self-confidence, school connectedness, peer bonding, etc.)
Behavior improvement/progress is monitored	Peers provide feedback and support	Examples: Empowerment group, Decision-making group, Healthy relationships group, Social skills group, Service-learning group, Youth leadership group
Examples: Grief/loss group, Crisis intervention group, Trauma witness group, Eating disorders group, ADHD group	Examples: Aggression replacement group, Self-esteem group, Intervention group, Grief group	


Group- Quick Overview

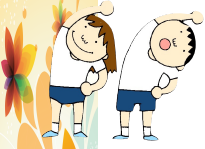
- Open vs. Closed Groups
- Grade levels / Ages
 - 1-2 year age level difference is recommended
- 6-8 participants is best
- 10 participants max for Life Skills groups



Typical Group Format



- Welcome
- Theme/Topic Introduction
- Check-in
- Activity
- Reflection
- Closing/Check-out







Check-in

- Consider it your group warm-up
- Provides facilitator with a gauge
- Can be quick *or* can be entire session depending on what comes up (for support groups)!





Check-in Examples

- *What's your number today?*
- *"Happy's and Crappy's"*
- *One word to describe how you're feeling* (try to avoid using sad, mad, happy, fine, I don't know)
- *Weather Report*
- *40 Thought-Provoking Questions*






Check-out




- Allow 5-8 minutes for this at the end of the session.
- Allows group to review the activity/group discussion.
- Reinforces points that needed to be clarified or underscored.
- Provides appropriate closure to a group.
- Leaves members "upshifted".

Facilitator Tip:
Set timer on your phone to remind you to wind down


Check-out Examples

- What is one thing you learned today?
- Practice some light stretching or deep breathing.
- Can someone summarize today's session for us?
- Share one word that represents what today's session was all about for you.
- Tell a joke.
- Share a positive quote.
- Group huddle / group saying.





Qualities of a Facilitator

- Respectful
- Listens
- Engages all students
- Non judgment
- Is open-minded
- Sense of humor
- Flexible
- Patient
- Prepared
- Creates a safe space
- Is fair
- Open / honest
- Other?

A facilitator is...	A facilitator is not...
• Keeper of the rules/norms	• Advisor or Problem Solver
• Role model	• Judge or critic
• Listener	• Expert
• Resource	• Parent
• Protector	• Peer
• One who encourages	• A therapist (unless you are licensed and are running therapy groups)
• Other?	• Other?



Questioning Techniques

1) Open Questions:

- Questions that aren't answered by "yes" or "no"
- Who / What / When / Where / Tell Me

"Please tell me more about that."

"What was that like for you?"

"Which part of the poem can you relate to?"

2) **Closed Questions:** Solicit a "yes/no" response. Youth is not asked/pushed to explore a response.



S.O.L.E.R.

S: Sit or Stand Squarely- your body facing the person or group

O: Open Posture- keep your arms, hands, legs, feet uncrossed. Keep your head upright.

L: Lean Forward- when people speak to you, move your body forward either by leaning in if you are sitting or by moving closer to the speaker if you are standing.

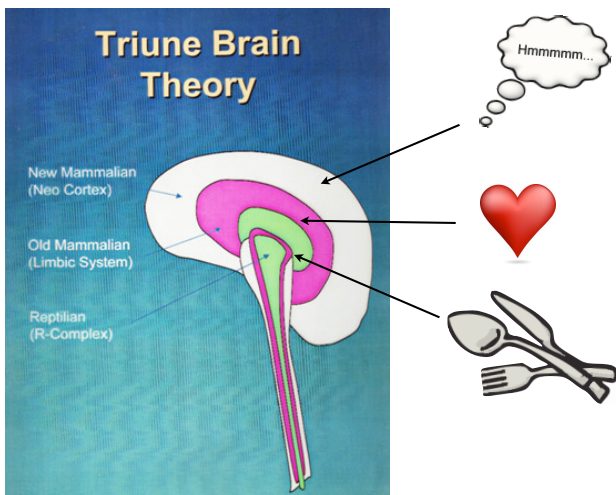
E: Eye Contact- maintain comfortable eye contact taking into account cultural differences

R: Relax- keep your body posture relaxed. Breathe! Lower your shoulders, unclench hands, calm jittery legs and hands.

Adapted from Egan, Gerard. The Skilled Helper, 6th edition. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1998.



Triune Brain Theory



Downshifting Examples

Goal: To get in touch with emotions

- Poems/stories that will illicit deep feelings
- Participant feedback/disclosure
- Sentence stems
- Example: "I am worried about..." / "Something I fear is..." / "The last time I cried was..." / "The family member that has caused me the most heartache is..."

Facilitator Tip: Never end a group session while participants are downshifted



What does it look / feel like?

- Participant is displaying emotion

Examples

- Crying
- Quiet / In deep thought
- On verge of tears
- Facial expression is noticeably different
- Room is quiet...you can hear a pin drop
- Vibe in room shifts...feels heavy



Upshifting Examples

Goal: Move back to "thinking" part of brain

- A funny story/joke
- Movement (stretching, shoulder rolls, etc.)
- Someone laughs/interrupts
- Shifting gears by taking three deep breaths

- Deep breathing
- Group huddle
- Muscle relaxation (tightening and releasing)
- Shake it out





Co-Facilitation

- Debrief after each group session if possible
 - *What did you like about today's session?*
 - *What could I have done differently?*
 - *How do you feel about my involvement/support?*
 - *One thing I need from you is _____*



Strengths-Based Approach

- Provide youth with positive feedback (more than areas of improvement)
- Make it a point to provide positive feedback for each youth (not in each session but throughout your overall group)
 - *"I appreciate you taking a risk today."*
 - *"I noticed many of you volunteered to share your thoughts during the reflection."*
 - *"Thank you for being brave enough to be vulnerable."*
 - *"I noticed you being inclusive of others- that's awesome."*



Preparation is Key

- Know about the topic you are discussing (you don't have to be an expert)
- Remember that you are a facilitator, not a presenter on the topic
- Prepare some questions you can ask to help guide the discussion



Lively Discussions

- Acknowledge and validate participants when they share
- Include everyone in the group discussion
- Use questions/statements to keep the conversation flowing
 - *Tell me more about that.*
 - *What does the rest of the group think?*
 - *Give me some specifics.*
 - *How can you apply what we've learned/talked about?*
 - *Why is this important?*



Addressing "cliques"

- Provide interactive ice-breakers that require students to talk with all members
- Assign students partners they don't know very well to work on an activity (i.e. "partner interview")
- Create a game around switching chairs/seats
- Lead a discussion around the importance of inclusivity



Creative Activities

- Art: drawing, painting t-shirts,
- Crafts: jewelry making, truth cards, soap making, paper mâché
- Physical: sports, physical challenges, human sculptures, dance/movement
- Relaxation: yoga, stretches, meditation, breathing
- Writing: journaling, poetry, song writing

