

Tips for Asking Reflection Questions

Reflection is a structured opportunity to think, speak, write, and/or draw about an experience in order to gain meaning and understanding. Reflection is essential for participants to make sense out of what they are doing, why they are doing it and the impact their participation has on others or them personally. Asking reflection questions makes the difference between having an interesting or enjoyable experience and having a learning experience. Some reflection tips include:

- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Answers are based on how the participant feels or thinks.
- Allow time for more than one participant to answer each question.
- Ask open-ended questions that begin with 'What' and 'How.'
- Try using non-question starters, such as "Tell us ____" and "Describe ____"
- Invite participants to complete first person sentence stems such as, "I enjoyed ____" or "I was surprised when ____"
- Make connections to similarities (and differences) in answers.
- If no one answers a question you ask, re-word it and ask it again.
- Respect different learning styles and allow time for participants to think before they answer.
- Remember, reflection questions are for the participants to answer, not you!



Study without reflection is a waste of time; Reflection without studying is dangerous. *Confucius*

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Tips for Managing Group Discussions

Even in the best of groups, there are times when you, as a peer facilitator, will need to address certain behaviors. Below are some tips to help keep the discussion focused while upholding group rules.



Everyone Talking at Once

“Remember our group rules? If we’re all talking at once, we may miss a great comment from someone.”

Off the Subject

“That’s very interesting. Now, let’s review what we’ve talked about up till now.” Or, “I appreciate your comment but our time is limited. Let’s get back to the question we were addressing.”

Side Conversations

“There are some side conversations going on. That makes it hard for the group to stay focused. Let’s remember our group rules and respect one another as we talk.”

Losing Attention

“I feel like some members of this group are not really listening. Let’s take a short break. Then I would like to give this another chance.”

Long-Winded Speaker

“You’ve raised lots of interesting points. Does anyone else have something to add?”

The Clown

“I really enjoy a good laugh, too, but I was wondering if you have anything else to say about what we were discussing?”

Disagreeable

“Everyone has a right to his/her own thoughts and feelings on the subject. Perhaps our next topic will be more in alignment with your ideas.”

The Dominator

“Can we hear from someone else who sees it differently?” Or, “Has anyone else had a similar experience?”

Too Quiet

“This question is only for the males/females in the room.”

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Tips for Successful Facilitation

To facilitate means to ‘make easy.’ It does not mean to teach or lecture. Think about what a traffic cop does as a metaphor for facilitation: manages the traffic, but does not dictate a car’s final destination. Some tips for facilitation include:

- Create an environment that is welcoming and comfortable.
- Model a friendly and positive attitude.
- Help establish group rules.
- Keep the participants focused.
- Provide clear instructions for learning activities.
- Encourage everyone to participate and share opinions. Observe a reaction to a participant’s sharing and verbalize it. *“Everyone seems to agree with you, Tamika.”*
- Listen carefully and repeat or paraphrase what is said for clarity and understanding. *“So Eli, you think...”*
- Model non-verbal ways to listen: eye contact, nodding appropriately, hand gestures, smiling, posture, etc.
- Ask open-ended, inviting questions in a relaxed and natural way to create discussion. *“What do you like about this statistic?”* vs. *“Do you like this statistic?”*
- Remember that silence is okay and allows for thinking time.
- Encourage the participants in their efforts. Praise good listening skills in others. *“Wow, you really did a great job following what Michaela just said.”*
- Acknowledge all ideas without judging. Avoid evaluative comments such as “good” or “great.” Non-verbal acknowledgment works well also, such as nodding and smiling.
- Thank everyone for their participation.



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