

Talk, Listen, Connect

Talk, Listen, Connect - Facilitator Tips

Answering the What-ifs



PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

DOH 961-1087 June 2015

This publication is adapted from The New York State WIC Program.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Washington State WIC Nutrition Program does not discriminate.

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats.

To submit a request, please call 1-800-841-1410 (TDD/TTY 711).

Facilitator Tips

What If . . .

1...it's uncomfortable? 1
 Getting Comfortable with Facilitation 1
 Ideas for comfortable groups 1

2... the conversation stops or no one participates?..... 2
 Getting Participation 2

3...I get stuck? 2
 Keeping it Moving 2

4... someone talks too much? 3
 Overly Talkative Participants..... 3

5... someone doesn't talk at all? 3
 Encouraging All to Participate 3

6...the topic goes way off track or there are side conversations? 4
 Keeping Everyone Focused 4

7...there is misinformation shared? 4
 Handling Misinformation: 4

8...I do not know the answer? 5
 Finding the Answer 5

9...someone wants handouts? 5
 Tips for using handouts 5

...it's uncomfortable?

Getting Comfortable with Facilitation

1. Comfort comes from practice.
2. What stage of change are you in about doing classes?
 - Contemplation—just thinking about it?
 - Preparation—making plans to do it?
 - Action—looking for tips on how to do it?
3. Make an outline or list of questions. Your session is a conversation and can't be scripted but you may be more comfortable with an outline.
4. Ask for help. Another staff person joining your group may help your confidence.
5. Start with a familiar group or topic. Move to other topics and groups as you get more comfortable and develop your skills.
6. Always remember the discussion is for your participants. Make your session a conversation and really listen.
7. Practice, practice, practice.

Ideas for comfortable groups

1. Set up chairs in a circle. TLC sessions aren't classes where the "teacher" faces the "students" in rows. They are circles for talking and sharing together.
2. Choose a seat in the circle. If you seat yourself so that you are "in charge" of the circle, your group will relate to you rather than with each other. Think carefully about where you will sit. Remember: you are the coach, not the "star of the show!"
3. Tell the group this is *their* time to share and connect. You serve as a guide. Let the group know how long the session will last (and make sure to finish on time.)
4. Offer children books, colors, or quiet toys in the middle of the circle. Maybe another staff person plays with or reads to the children in a corner of the room.
5. An uncomfortable group may be reflecting your discomfort. Your words and body language may put the group at ease - smile, thank them for coming, etc.

... the conversation stops or no one participates?

Getting Participation

1. Share expectations: this is *their* discussion group, not yours but you'll guide *their discussion about* what they know about the topic.
2. Ask for participation *early*. Your group is more likely and the more *often they'll* participate for the whole session.
3. Stick with questions that are open-ended. Have some back up questions ready.
4. Start off in twos and have each pair discuss your topic. Ask pairs to share what they discussed with the group. Once they talk to a partner, it's easier to talk to the group.
5. Asking for examples is a powerful way to get conversations going. It's easier to share how it is - our experience or story (of what their child does, for instance) rather than how something might be.
6. Describe a common situation in personal terms, like "*Mary has a 2 year old, Johnny, who refuses to eat; all he wants to do is drink all day.*" Then ask, "*From your experience, what would help Mary with this?*" Get several ideas from the group.
7. Share a WIC nutrition handout and ask for examples from their own experience relate to what it says.
8. Ask a question and ask people to raise their hands if they have an opinion about it. Most people have opinions to share.
9. Always say "thank you" for responses to your direct questions. Make sure the first few speakers are warmly thanked and feel "well-protected." The group is watching how others are treated. Your warm responses set an atmosphere of trust.
10. Are you giving the participants a chance to contribute to the conversation?
 - Ask open-ended questions.
 - Ask only one question at a time. Allow adequate time to respond.
11. Be okay with silence – wait a moment. Give participants the chance to fill short silences.

...I get stuck?

Keeping it Moving

1. Ask the group their feelings, opinions or experiences on the topic.
2. Brainstorm with the group to come up with lots of ideas in a short amount of time. Remember to catch all ideas whether or not they are *good* ideas. Sometimes the wildest ideas start the best conversations.
3. Ask the group to share the ideas that worked for them.
4. If all else fails and you feel stuck, ask the group to suggest a new topic. "Seems like we're stuck. Is there a nutrition topic you'd like to discuss?"

...someone talks too much?

Overly Talkative Participants

1. The most important rule is to be tactful.
2. Interrupt with a smile (always with a smile) and say something like: “Betty, I’m sorry to interrupt, but it’s time to go on to my next question, which is....” Or “Betty, thanks for starting us down this path. Since we are getting short on time and I want to make sure we all get to share” Or “I’m noticing others are wanting to talk.” (Acknowledge, and look toward others).
3. Going around in a circle is a strategy for give others a chance to speak. Only use if someone’s taking over the group. Offer “Let’s go around the circle so everyone who wants to gets a chance to speak—you can say ‘I pass’ if you choose....” With large groups, ask for very short responses, but give everyone a chance to speak.

...someone doesn’t talk at all?

Encouraging All to Participate

1. Watch body language or facial expressions showing a quiet person wants to speak. Invite them to speak by saying, “*You look like you might be about to say something?*” or “*Was there something you wanted to share?*”
2. If a quiet person makes a move to talk, but someone else jumps in first, say, “Let’s go one at a time. Rita (quiet person), what would you like to share?”
3. Respond to nonverbal signals saying someone wants to speak. For silent members with blank looks, or heads down. Move on. No one wants to be put on the spot - don’t force them to speak

Reasons people stay quiet:

- Overly talkative speakers intimidate them.
- They may like to think before they share.
- They may not see a natural opening to say what they want to.
- They don’t want to be seen as too pushy.
- They want to check out the group before opening up.
- They feel their ideas are not worth sharing.
- The anxiety of speaking up may be too high to overcome without help.
- They just want the group to end.

...the topic goes way off track or there are side conversations?

Keeping Everyone Focused

1. Tell the group they've veered off track, and summarize the information discussed so far.
2. Ask another question about the original topic, or an open-ended question steering them back to a related topic.
3. Take care not to embarrass anyone by drawing attention to them.
4. For distracting side conversations call the talking member by name and ask a question to draw them back in. Like, "*Nicole, how old was Matthew when he started solid foods?*" or "*Patty, what finger foods does Tommy like to eat?*"

...there is misinformation shared?

Handling Misinformation:

1. Decide which minor points to ignore. Be tactful so participants are willing speak up again, and others aren't afraid to "say something wrong," too.
2. Show respect and first ask for a different point of view from the group or if none is given, offer one yourself. Ask, "*What do the rest of you think about that?*" Lots of times, the group will offer up alternatives and correct the misinformation.
3. Another rule of thumb is only address misinformation you will lose sleep over without correcting it. Most misinformation that comes up does not fit into this category.

Here are some approaches others have used to correct misinformation or misconceptions without embarrassing the participant:

- "*You've brought up an interesting issue. Has anyone had a different experience or different information?*"

-
- "*I am glad that worked for you. Other people have found that xyz worked better for them. Has anyone tried xyz?*"
 - "*I wonder...would you have done anything differently if you had had the information we have talked about today?*"

...I do not know the answer?

Finding the Answer

1. Stay calm
2. Keep from rambling or making something up
3. Stay away from giving misinformation or outdated information
4. Be honest, acknowledge that you do not know the answer
5. Offer to find the answer
6. Don't ignore the question

Sample responses:

"That is a great question I've never been asked before. I want to make sure that you get the correct answer, so would it be okay if we go to my office (or check with other staff) after the group to find the answer?" (And make sure to follow-up).

"There has been some new information/research on that topic and I want to make sure you get the correct answer. Can we look into that together after the group?"

"One of my co-workers has much more experience with this and would be able to answer your question. She is here today. Would it be okay if, after the group, we talk to her about this?"

...someone wants handouts?

Tips for using handouts

1. Use handouts to stimulate discussion or as a resource *not* as the focus of the TLC sessions.
2. If a participant requests a handout get the handout to them at the end of the group. You might say *"I'm happy to get that information for you, would it be okay if we continued the discussion and after the group, I could get that material for you and any others that would like it?"*.
3. When offering a handout, always give participants a choice of whether they want to keep any printed materials. It shows respect for the participant's ability to decide whether or not they want the information.

Talk, Listen, Connect

Talk, Listen and Connect - More about TLC Sessions for Facilitators

Guide to Making TLC Work



PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

DOH 961-1087 June 2015

This publication is adapted from The New York State WIC Program.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
Washington State WIC Nutrition Program does not discriminate.

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats.
To submit a request, please call 1-800-841-1410 (TDD/TTY 711).

Talk, Listen, Connect - TLC

Parent groups can follow a conversation. The TLC sessions offer a framework for those conversations. The tools help participants get involved right away, feel comfortable with each other, and set a friendly, fun sharing tone for the group.

TLC sessions start with provocative questions, activities or stories leading to feeling conversations, not to an immediate transfer of knowledge. The goal is to hook the participant, and engage in the conversation and ultimately leave the clinic feeling valued, confident, and successful.

You want your participants to begin to think about a particular topic in an emotional way. You want your participants to feel there is a real heart that drives WIC services. In the end, you want people to connect to desired behaviors with their core values and a greater sense of well-being. You want them to think positively about behavior change and to feel good about their decisions and themselves.

Conversation Starters:

Here are some examples of some opening questions (conversation starters) you might use depending on your audience:

- What surprised you most about being a parent?
- What's one thing your parents did for you that you hope to do for your child?
- If there is one thing you would like your child to remember about family meals, what would it be?
- If you had one piece of advice for a new mother, what would it be?
- Which of these faces (face expression cards) reflects how you feel about the way your child eats?
- Pick a paint swatch that reminds you of your child's favorite food.
- How does being active with your children make you feel about your children's future?

It's fun to sometimes read an excerpt from a news article, and then ask the group how they feel about what they just heard. For example, you could read off a quote from the newspaper:

This quote came from an article in the Daily News today. It's called Nine Ways Food Labels Mislead the Consumer:

“Research from Cornell University has shown that people tend to eat up to 50% more calories when they eat low-fat snack foods, compared with eating the original. It also showed many foods labeled as low-fat only have about 30% fewer calories.

How does it make you feel about the foods you buy?

Talk, Listen, Connect - TLC

This could lead to a discussion about other labeling issues, like light juices with water, artificial sweeteners, or vitamin waters. It leaves the subject broad enough to capture the interest of group members, but does not limit it so that it feels to the participants like the facilitator has a focused agenda of her own.

The conversation starter may focus on specific topic areas and then the discussion may evolve into something slightly different. Don't worry. Trust that the conversation goes where it needs to. If the conversation veers WAY off track, it is your role as facilitator to bring it back to a WIC related topic. Here are some examples of things you could say to steer the conversation back on track.

- “How does _____ relate to feeding your baby/child/family?”
- This is a really good discussion, and you might like to continue after the section. For now, let's get back to what we were discussing.

A good conversation starter will focus on a topic without being too narrow. For example:

“I heard a report this week about the risk of eating tuna during pregnancy due to the mercury content. It's recommended to limit tuna intake during pregnancy. How does this make you feel?”

A potential (and unpredicted) response to this very narrow question might be: *“I don't eat fish.”*

At this point, there isn't much of a discussion regarding tuna consumption during pregnancy. A broader question that would generate more response may be: *“With all the things occurring in pregnancy (morning sickness, cravings, etc...), how have your eating habits changed?”*

The potential responses to this question might lead the discussion in a number of directions that would be relevant and of interest to the participants, far beyond the topic of tuna.

Keep in mind that a basic skill necessary for developing and using conversation starters successfully is the ability to formulate and use open-ended questions. Here are sample open-ended questions that may help you keep the conversation flowing:

Introduction Phrases:

- What concerns do people have about....?
- How do you feel about....?
- What have you heard about....?
- What's your biggest fear about...?

Transition Phrases:

- What things have you tried?
- What ideas haven't worked?
- What ideas have worked?

Talk, Listen, Connect - TLC

- Why do you think that's a concern?
- If you made a change, how would that affect _____?
- Reflect on comments (paraphrase).

Closing Phrases:

- What is one thing you could take away with you today?
- What ideas have you heard that might work for you?
- What would you do differently now?

Practicing conversation starters helps you develop your facilitation skills. Spend 5-10 minutes of your staff meetings practicing conversation starters in small groups. Working with your coworkers provides a nonthreatening environment for you to try different wording or phrasing. This allows for feedback and collaboration. Share with each other the conversation starters that worked well and those that did not. Brainstorm ideas for improvement.

As you get more curious about what drives your participants' behaviors, participants will in turn get more curious about themselves. Feeling like you have to know something or get it right because you are the *WIC staff* turns off curiosity. Be curious about the person, not about the details or facts of their lives, stories or situations.

For instance, when you ask a participant "What are all the possibilities in your community for becoming more physically active?" and continue probing in that direction, the focus is on the facts or details. Instead, asking "What about becoming more physically active with your family is important to you?" puts the focus on the person and what drives their behavior. Now the participant has an opportunity to **connect with the feelings that drive their behaviors.**