



Connect with Kids

## Facilitator Guide

- Your Role as the Discussion Leader
- Strategies for Positive Facilitation
- Challenges and Suggestions
- Discussion Handout Template



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## Facilitator Guide Your Role as a Leader

As the facilitator, you set the tone of the workshop or meeting. People in the audience will take their cue from you. Your energy, enthusiasm and sincerity will help keep create a welcoming atmosphere and positive experience.

### Opening Tips

- Start and end the meeting/workshop ON TIME.
- Let participants know what to expect, such as, *“The purpose of this workshop/video presentation is to gain insight into issues facing teens and families today, to learn from each other and share our experiences and perspectives.”*
- Describe the video (**see the description of each video under Parent Resources**) and be sure to let participants know there will be an opportunity for questions and discussion.

### Discussion

Discussion is a very important part a successful workshop/group meeting. Use the Family Viewing Guide, Resource Guide and/or the Discussion/Self-Reflection that accompany the videos to help start the discussion. You may download and print the Guides or refer to them online.

- Following the video presentation, you will help guide the discussion and encourage participants to share. Kick-off the group discussion by focusing on the video’s content.
- Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts about the workshop topic and/or video.
- As the facilitator, your role is to remain neutral – be supportive and encouraging of *all* points of view.
- If participants get off-topic, it’s your job to bring them back on task. Find a moment in the conversation where you can gently remind participants of the goal and topic.
- Remember, there is no *one* right way to parent! In the discussions, you’ll learn that family circumstances and personal experiences vary widely, as do outcomes and expectations.

## Strategies For Positive Facilitation

- ✓ **Avoid giving advice or suggestions.** Keep your personal comments to a minimum and avoid criticizing the ideas of others. Because you are the leader, your comments carry extra credibility or “weight.”
- ✓ **Do not interrupt** unless there is someone continually dominating the conversation; at that point, try saying, “*Thank you so much – does anyone else want to add to that?*”
- ✓ **Respect everyone.** You may need to encourage those who are quiet to voice their opinions and tactfully remind the long-winded ones that time is limited and you would like to move the discussion along.

Try one of these phrases for dealing with participants who dominate the discussion: “*We've heard from this side of the room quite a bit. (Turn to other side of the room.) How about anyone over here ... what are your thoughts?*” Or say, “*Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet.*”

- ✓ **If several people are trying to talk at once, ask them to take turns.** Try to identify who was first, second, etc., and make sure to call on everyone when it is his/her proper turn. You might want to agree to limit each speaker's time or ask that no one speak a second time until everyone who *wants* to speak has had an opportunity to do so.
- ✓ **If the discussion is getting off-topic, redirect it back on course.** If someone is becoming argumentative or overly negative, tactfully intervene and try to turn the discussion in a more constructive direction.

## Challenges You May Encounter & Suggested Facilitator Guidelines

- **Too many people:** When more people show up than expected it can sometimes cause challenges, such as not enough time for discussion. If this happens, try this: after viewing the video, split the group into two. State a clear set of objectives for the two groups and then move between them to monitor discussion.
- **Someone is talking too long:** Try to find a good place to step in and summarize what he or she is saying and move on to the next person who wants to contribute.
- **Someone is asking too many questions or dominating the topic:** Reduce the likelihood of this happening by reviewing the ground rules before each meeting and setting a clear agenda. You may want to suggest limiting comments to a few minutes.
- **Socializing:** If people are socializing beyond the start time, acknowledge that you enjoy seeing everyone but ask that they respect everyone's time. Remind your audience they can visit after the meeting.
- **Talking in groups:** If a small group is talking amongst themselves while others are speaking, politely ask them to respect everyone's input. If people start complaining or the meeting turns into a "bull session," try to re-establish control of the group by restating the objectives and letting them know how much time is left in the meeting.

**If the group participant is responding to a question that asks for an opinion (*Why do you think the child reacted that way?*) or an emotional response (*How did you feel when you observed a given segment of the video?*)...**

It is helpful to:

Summarize the response without judging it.  
Empathize with the response.

It is not helpful to:

Evaluate or judge the response.  
Probe with "why" questions.  
Give false reassurance.  
Minimize the depth of feeling.

**If a group participant cannot identify a solution to a challenging situation or is unable to see more than one solution...**

It is helpful to:

Have the group brainstorm alternative solutions.

It is not helpful to:

Ignore the frustration.

**If a group participant asks a question or brings up a challenging situation that is beyond your scope of expertise... (*Where can I get professional help for my child?*)**

It is helpful to:

Refer the participant to a school counselor

It is not helpful to:

Guess at an appropriate solution



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## Discussion Handout

On the following page is the **Discussion Handout template**, which you can print and distribute to participants. You can also tailor the handout to the workshop/meeting topic, video title, etc.) Participants can use the handout to take notes and help gather their thoughts.



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## Discussion Overview - Notes

**Workshop/Video Title:**

**What was this video about?**

**Key Points:**

**Facts/Tips:**

**Notes:**