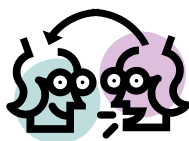


Group work – facilitating tips learned the hard way...



In prenatal and postnatal work with inner city families, Healthy Start teams have found that there are some definite styles of communicating that work better than others.

No one is born knowing these things...

STARTING POINT: Learn & get comfortable with the basic subject material!

Ways that <i>fizzle</i> (less successful)	Ways that <i>engage</i> (more successful)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/no questions ("closed") such as "any questions?" fizzles with many groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended questions that connect with the listeners' experiences – such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>"of the mothers in the room, has anyone had an episiotomy?" and then follow-up...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about something without checking into the experience of the group (making assumptions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...So before I start, who has had a baby before?" (validating the experience in the group; adult education in practice)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about a topic without any visuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing a topic with use of props (and works well if the props are passed around or handled in some way); other visuals enhance messages too.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singling someone out for special attention or for an answer (perceived as being "put on the spot") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try a general observation that may create comfort for someone to speak up, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>"Some of you may have experience with quitting smoking. Would anyone like to tell us about that?"</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking you MUST KNOW EVERYTHING (about the topic) creates a sense of isolation and panic for you that affects the listening group - and, distances you from it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing your comfort with the material/topic reassures both the listening group and you! Have fun and everyone else will too. • Trusting the experience of the team & turning to them for help; it works and - and relaxes everyone! (You can't know everything!) • Communicating well and easily are more important than subject expertise!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical words or other difficult words turn people off or away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLAIN language and examples or pictures always work best
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading from notes is a definite killer of group engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try reading <i>one</i> sentence only, then using props and activities to fill out the topic and engage the group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignoring restless body language leads to despair – for everyone! • The feeling of obligation to "finish" a topic can be perceived as talking "on and on"... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you're losing the group, stop OR do something right away to engage them • Toss the obligation to finish (it's your need not theirs). Replace it with humour and respect for the needs of people / the group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having too many learning objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember: it's about KEY MESSAGES, like advertising!