

## How to Be a Successful HMV Facilitator

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### The Basics

- Anyone with an interest in encouraging group discussion can be a facilitator
- Almost anyone has the potential to be a great facilitator if he can relate to the topic on a highly personal level
- You do not have to be a mental health professional or religious leader to do well
- Create a welcoming environment from the beginning, introducing yourself to all members
- Spell out the ground rules of HMV:
  - Talk about your own thoughts and feelings
  - Respect others
  - What is said in HMV stays in HMV
- Have everyone go around the circle and introduce themselves
  - Each should say his name, either why they came or hope to get out of it
  - This breaks the ice to get everyone speaking
- Always start by introducing the topic
- It often best to lead with a personal story to share
- The facilitator sets the tone
  - The more personal the sharing, the more personal the group sharing
- Generally, the less the facilitator speaks, the better
- Enthusiasm goes a long way to engaging people in the session

### Framing the Discussion

- Questions should ideally be open ended, not “yes or no”
- Use the interrogative pronouns: who, what, when, where, why and how
  - Questions that frame the issue in time
    - How something has changed over your lifetime
    - The difference in something from one generation to another
    - Pinpoint times in your life that the topic held specific meaning
  - Questions that frame the issue in impact
    - How you have been affected by the topic
    - Ways the topic has affected family, community, etc.
  - Questions which address feelings
    - What the topic has meant to you
    - How you have come to feel the way you do about the topic
  - Questions which clarify how the issue ties you to others
    - What you feel in common with others around regarding the topic
    - Where you differ from others regarding the topic
  - Questions which relate to other parts of your life
    - When and how the issue may affect your work, spiritual life, etc.
    - How the issue affects your well-being
- It is OK for the discussion to move off topic as long as it amplifies involvement, but you should try to find an opportune moment to redirect to the issue at hand

- While no one is obligated to speak, it is OK to call on someone you believe has something to add
- If you select the topic carefully, the discussion will naturally unfold

### Handling Problems

- Potential problems, though rare, can disrupt the HMV experience, so be prepared
- You ask a question and no one responds
  - Rephrase the question more simply
  - Start the discussion by being the first to respond to the question
  - Call on someone who is likely to respond
  - Ask participants to think about the question for a moment, and then go around the circle for feedback
  - Remind members that this is not a lecture and we are here to listen to one another
- Someone is dominating the discussion
  - You can sensitively shift the focus of attention away from that participant
  - Acknowledge what was said but you want to give everyone a chance to contribute
  - Summarize what the person said and move on
  - Ask others how they feel about what the individual has said
  - Directly call on someone else in the group
  - Transition to another question
- Someone becomes very emotional about a topic
  - Let it flow and validate the feelings
  - Tell them that it is healthy to express emotions
  - Remind the group that this is a safe place for expression
  - You can state that their emotions are understandable given their experiences
  - Ask if anyone else can relate to those feelings
  - Thank him for his honesty
- If discussion wanes, either pose another question or tell another personal story