

TIPS FOR LEADING SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOPS



FACILITATING WORKSHOPS

Adapted from *Who is My Child? Understanding Children's Temperaments*, KERA, 2006.

This guide is a tool to help you be more effective as a facilitator of this program. The ideas will be helpful whether you are new to training parents or have been doing it for many years. As a workshop facilitator, you will be responsible for conveying information to your participants and for providing opportunities for them to ask questions and develop ways to use this information in their families.

You may already be an experienced facilitator. If that is the case, you may already have developed your own methods for setting up and conducting workshops. If you are a new facilitator, or if you just want to review some helpful information, this section can help you. You will find information on everything from engaging your audience to marketing your workshop. If you are working with a co-facilitator, you will want to review the curriculum, outline together and decide how to divide the presentations, discussions and activities between you.

When facilitating your workshop think **"PARENTS!"**

Preparation

Adult learning basics

Role as facilitator

Engage your participants

Needs of the participants

Translate knowledge into practice

Setting (Room Arrangement)

Preparation

Use the facilitator's planning sheet provided at the beginning of the manual. Check your equipment: microphones, charts, DVD, television, projection machine, chart stands, screen, etc. Are they in working order? What if something goes out? Do you have a backup? You may want to have an extra bulb or prepare a few copies of your overheads in case your overhead projector develops problems. Can you be heard from the back of the room? If not, plan on having a microphone and test them before the workshop.

Know your building and room. Visit the building and room before your presentation if possible. This will allow you to plan room setup. Find out where the bathrooms, water and telephones are. Be sure to provide this information (you may want to make a chart) for participants. Have all materials and copies needed before your workshops.

Role as Facilitator

Your role as facilitator is to help your participants understand the information you have, and to present and to provide opportunities for them to develop skills.

Your workshop participants will expect you to:

- Recognize their experiences and knowledge and build on them.
- Stay within timeframes.
- Cover what you say you will cover.
- Focus on developing a relationship, not just the content.
- Provide information that they can relate to what they already know.
- Give concrete examples and an understanding of how to apply the information they are given.
- Provide activities that allow them to direct what and how they learn.
- Understand that learning will be affected significantly by feelings, thoughts and physical state.
- Answer for participants: **WIIFM**: What's In It for Me?

Some tips for you to keep in mind:

- Your participants are responsible for their own learning.
- See yourself as a partner in the learning process, and treat participants as equals.
- Recognize your participants' expertise as well as your own, and encourage them to share it in appropriate ways.
- Create a learning environment that is safe and comfortable and encourages sharing and learning.
- Remember that research has shown that people must be involved in new ways about every 8-10 minutes to maintain interest in their training.
- Provide materials at each table for participants to "play with," such as markers, Post-it® notes, Play-Doh and pipe cleaners.
- Be friendly and show concern for attendees.
- Ask for opinions and allow participants time to respond.
- Leave plenty of time for questions. If you do not know the answers, it's okay!
- Let participants know that you will find out and bring or send them the answer.

Adult Learning Basics

Adults have different learning styles. Some learn better by doing. Others need to hear things in order to learn them, and others learn best by seeing and others by talking about concepts. Provide learning activities that emphasize all of these learning styles. Also, adults bring previous experience and knowledge to the learning setting.

Needs of the Audience

Your participants will learn best when they are comfortable. Provide refreshments water and comfortable seating. Be aware of the changing moods of the participants. If people seem to be getting bored or tired, have them move around, stand up, or do a different type of activity. The audience needs to feel successful as parents and as participants. Thank them for comments and reinforce when they share an example of good parenting.

Taking Care of the Needs of Your Group

Give them permission to move around during the workshop if they need to. Give them permission to pass or “Go Fishing.” There are times when someone may not wish to share in small or large group discussions. Let participants know up front they can pass if they choose. Also, let them know that everyone occasionally daydreams and does not hear what is said. If that happens, and they have been asked something, they can say, “Sorry, I went fishing!” It is a fun and non-threatening way to admit to inattention.

Translate Knowledge into Practice

Throughout the workshop, ask how the ideas presented can be applied in participants’ lives. One goal of the facilitator is to make sure the information from the workshop gets carried back to daily interaction. By continually reinforcing the practical application of the information, you are reinforcing the need to begin to incorporate this information into the family. Some ways to do this include:

- When a participant asks a question, see if others have the same problem and ask how they deal with it.
- Review, review, review! Content must be revisited in some form (through discussion, activities, video, writing) for it to be remembered and applied.
- Make it fun and use activities to review.
- Revisit the information at another time after this workshop. If you have the opportunity to contact your workshop participants or have them in another workshop, ask if they have used the ideas and how they have worked.
- Encourage participants to pull out their materials once a week for the next month and review them. They will be more likely to apply it in their lives.

Setting: Arranging the Room

The way the room is set up and arranged is critical to the learning process. A room with stadium seating where the seats are small and legroom is cramped will encourage participants to think about how uncomfortable they are instead of about the content of the workshop. Avoid last-minute frustrations by knowing your room and its arrangement ahead of time.

Good Room Set-Up:

Be sure the room has adequate lighting, comfortable seating and lots of leg room. Ask for a room that has tables and chairs to give participants more room and to allow them to write, prop their arms, lean and to have a place for their hands. Set up the room so that your participants can see each other and can easily see the video monitor and the overhead. Set tables up for 4 to 6 participants at each table. Be sure there is a table in the front just for your things. Arrange a table at the back of the room for refreshments and another for any display that you wish to use. If you do not have tables, arrange chairs in semi-circles. Materials that will be needed by participants can be placed on the floor in front of each semi-circle. If you do not have tables, you can provide hard-backed notepads or even books for writing surfaces. If you have fixed seating such as stadium seating, encourage groups of three to turn toward each other and form a group. Check the room's lighting and windows. Will the sunlight reflect and cause problems? Ask if charts can be posted on walls. If not, purchase self-adhesive flip charts or copy your charts on 11x17 paper and place on each table as you need them. Check to see where audiovisual equipment can be located.

What about Barriers to Attendance?

It is often difficult for participants to attend workshops. Work hours, childcare, transportation problems or feeling uncomfortable with the surroundings can all prevent parents from attending. Ask yourself, "What would keep parents away?" Families may not have childcare or transportation. Court-ordered parents may feel uncomfortable attending a workshop provided in a social services office. Shift workers may not be able to attend at night. Identify the barriers that the parents you are targeting will have, and then develop strategies to remove those barriers.

Barrier: Families Often Need Childcare

Solutions:

- Parents can be charged for on-site childcare.
- The cost of childcare can be included in the cost of the workshop if you are charging a fee.
- If parents cannot afford childcare, ask teen youth groups, such as service organizations at high schools or church youth groups, to provide care.
- Often youth leaders are willing to oversee this process.
- Offer the workshop on two different nights, and ask parents to trade childcare.
- If the workshop is at a childcare center, ask the director if it would be possible for the center to provide childcare.
- Offering the workshop and providing childcare can become a business deduction from business taxes.

Barrier: Transportation**Solutions:**

- For many families, transportation is a barrier.
- Provide transportation by bus or van to the program.
- Provide bus passes for attendees.
- Plan your program within walking distance of your target population.
- Arrange for groups to walk together or, for those in unsafe areas, to be accompanied to the workshop.
- Offer workshops in apartment clubhouses or in housing authority offices.

Barrier: Language**Solutions:**

- Participants will not attend programs if they cannot understand the language spoken.
- If most of your target population speaks another language, secure a facilitator or co-facilitator who speaks their language.
- Ask someone to translate for you as you facilitate.
- Provide written materials in the languages of your participants.
- When you send out information on your program, prominently display the fact that there will be translation.
- Plan two workshops: one in English and the other in the language of the majority of the participants.

Barrier: Incentives**Solutions:**

- Provide incentives such as snacks and door prizes to encourage attendance.
- Provide meals or snacks.
- Ask participants or co-sponsors to assist with meals and snacks. They can provide potluck dishes or take turns providing snacks.
- Volunteers or service organizations can be asked to provide meals or refreshments.
- Donations can be requested from local grocery stores for snacks.
- Some fast food restaurants may donate or provide a discount to nonprofit groups for meals that could be picked up and taken to the workshop for distribution.
- Give certificates that verify attendance and the number of hours of the workshop.
- Door prizes are great incentives for reluctant and teen participants, as well as a nice bonus for all who attend the workshop.
- Local businesses will usually provide discounts or freebies such as passes to movies, skating, bowling, books for and about children, or games or toys that encourage interaction with children.

- You can obtain pamphlets, booklets and free information about children from local health departments, Cooperative Extension Offices, Red Cross, and groups such as the American Heart Association or American Lung Association.
- Samples of products from companies are also great incentives for parents. If you have a local company that produces items that parents might use, call and see if they will provide samples.
- Involve local businesses by asking them to donate snacks or door prizes.
- Give certificates of completion to participants.

Tickets

Distribute tickets (available at discount and variety stores) for participants to place in a drawing for prizes. Participants can write their names on the back of the tickets and deposit in a basket. Give tickets for returning from breaks on time, to honor those who share great ideas, and as fun rewards for races and activities during the workshop. You should be sure that everyone gets at least one ticket. Prizes can be fast food certificates, books, small toys, healthy snacks, balls or other active equipment.

