

## Tips for Training Discussion Facilitators Mid-America PETS

Studies show that adults learn better in a discussion situation, especially when the topic is one that doesn't fall in the area of science, technology or exposure to extreme ideas. Creativity breeds creativity, so an open relaxed atmosphere provides an arena for creative thinking.

Remember -- you are a facilitator – not a teacher – not the answer person. The participants know the answers, they just need to focus. One idea will lead to another.

- Appoint someone to put major ideas on flip chart sheets.
- Allow for innovative thinking. Questions may be scripted – answers aren't.
- Don't be the judge of the quality of a comment. All comments are taken equally. Let other participants comment on a suggestion. Be neutral – ask others' opinions.
- Ask for feelings as well as opinions. Draw people out, encourage discussion.
- Paraphrase – ask one person to repeat what was said & state what that person meant.
- Ask for clarification – ask for examples.
- Ask for a summary.

### **LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN**

- Try to include a large number of people in the discussion.
- Don't feed participants the answers. All of the points don't have to be made.
- If discussion occurs – and it's on the topic—let it keep going. If it's not on the topic, steer it back on course.

Don't rush through the discussion. If you don't get to all of the questions – it's OK. Your success doesn't depend on the timeline. However, don't spend too much time on one issue. You can always say "We'll come back to this later." & have the recorder highlight it on the flip chart. Then if there is time at the end of the session, you can discuss the topic in further detail.

Here are some discussion tips:

1. Ask a question of the entire group. (Question options: ask only, or place on overhead, PowerPoint, or flip chart)
2. After each answer – ask again – to get more answers.
3. Involve someone who hasn't participated by asking a question directed to them.
4. Repeat the question from a group member & ask for responses from others in the group. Facilitator should not answer the question.
5. Ask questions that will invite discussion – not questions with a yes or no answer.
6. Summarize at closing.

Don't be too formal. Have a good time. If you have a good time, the participants will also.

*Thanks to PDG Jane Molloy (D6190) for providing these training tips.*