

# SURFACE TO SOUL

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## 15 Tips for Facilitating Groups

1. Create a safe and positive learning environment. It is risky for people to share their ideas, reactions, and opinions in any environment where they feel exposed or unsafe. Create behavioral norms regarding comments and judgments during group activities and discussions to increase the amount of sharing and interaction.
2. Create settings that support your learning objectives. Meet at a park if you're talking about God's creation. Use props and arrange spaces to maximize the experience.
3. Sequence processing activities by beginning with simple conversational prompts. Gradually allow group members to pass during discussions and debriefings. This empowers participants to have control over their learning and practice reflective feedback at their own pace. Participants can experience valuable reflection even if they don't share it with the group.
4. Use open-ended questions. Summarize or restate what was said, or even better, have a group member restate the discussion.
5. Use activities you already know as learning and reflective tools. Often openers and ice-breaking activities can be used to process an experience.
6. Honor people's learning styles. Provide settings that include multi-media, storytelling, physical movement, role-playing, case studies, journaling, and more. Invite participants to lead the activities and teach key concepts to one another.
7. View silences as okay, even necessary. Allow time for group members to think and formulate their ideas.
8. Be prepared for the group to take reflection somewhere different than you had in mind - you might learn something new! Allow participants to shape the desired learning outcomes.
9. Look for teachable moments! Sometimes a group will experience a pivotal teachable moment in the middle of a problem solving initiative. Brain-based learning has shown that immediate feedback and reflection can be valuable. It can be a very effective practice to reflect at different times in a program depending on the group and situation.
10. Mix up your methods. Variety is not only the spice of life, but according to new scientific brain research, novelty and the use of different learning tools and methods facilitates learning.
11. Process activities differently. Allow the group to "self-process." The facilitator doesn't have to hear it or lead it for quality reflection time to take place.
12. Include both individual reflection and group consensus activities. This will help address different learning styles and allow for richer reviewing experiences.
13. Take a risk. Experiment. Allow for the chance that an activity might flop. There is always something to be learned. Some effective tools have been created purely by accident.
14. Allow for closure at the end of the program. Share and discuss how learnings may be applied to real life.
15. Evaluate the learning session. List what worked and what didn't. Imagine new ways to facilitate in the future.



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