GROUP FACILITATION TIPS

If you are participating in a group...

• Use “I” statements to reflect your own experience and own your opinions.

• Consider the balance of “air-time” and how much or how little you’ve participated. If you feel like you’ve begun to dominate the discussion, take a pause and allow others to engage. Listening is as important as talking. If you feel like you’ve been quiet for the whole time, push yourself to contribute to the conversation—your voice is needed too!

• Be present when you’re present: arrive on time, give the conversation your full focus, and try not to double-book yourself or need leave early.

• Model vulnerability. Being willing to say, “I don’t know”, or to discuss a time when things didn’t go the way you had hoped can help create the opportunity for others to follow your lead and generate a more authentic discussion.

• Everyone’s voice is valuable. The diversity of our community is a strength when we take time to listen to others whose experiences and opinions differ from our own. Even when we disagree with others, respecting their opinions and beliefs widens the way our community engages with one another.

• Seek first to understand, not to be understood. Try to practice engaging your curiosity when you respond to another person’s statement.

• Acknowledge and appreciate others in the group when they have articulated something you hold to be true as well.

• What we say here stays here. To support this group feeling safe, we ask that our conversation stay private to those present in this group.
If you are facilitating a group...

• Prepare.
  As the facilitator, your first duty is to support other people’s experience. You will have responses to the conversation and can share your responses if it feels appropriate, but your primary job is as a facilitator, not a participant. In advance of the conversation, reflect on your own life experiences, times when you made a detour from your chosen path, and what your experience was like at the time when you navigated that redirection.

  Prepare yourself emotionally. You will be holding the experiences and feelings of the group while you are facilitating, so managing your own emotions is an important part of the process. Plan time in your schedule for prep and post-group time to support effective facilitation.

• Create outlets for yourself.
  As the facilitator and holder of the experience of the group, you may need some other spaces where you can talk about your own experience. Journaling may be helpful in this regard. Or you might want to discuss your feelings with a therapist, confidante, or friend (in ways that respect the privacy of your group, consistent with group norms). Think of this as putting a plan in place to give yourself a release-valve on holding everything you will absorb as the group facilitator.

• Build trust.
  Create opportunities early in the conversation to support and model this group as a safe space. Being vulnerable and sharing can feel risky, and the group will be more willing to engage when they feel that they are “held” by the group facilitator.