

El Camino

APPENDIX F:

General Facilitation Tips



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Creating an Inclusive & Youth-Centered Space

- **Address Discrimination.** Some groups of youth experience barriers to achieving their goals that are due to institutional discrimination. Facilitators should be equipped to address it in a way that acknowledges the effects of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism while also maintaining the focus on empowering youth to make choices that support their personal goals. Facilitators should be understanding of specific challenges that their Latino students may be facing including language barriers; legal status; expanded family duties such as caring for siblings, translating or interpreting for family; and religious barriers to contraception, among others.
- **Ensure LGBTQ+ Youth Feel Safe.** Discuss gender identity and sexual orientation in an affirming way. Be prepared to adequately address homophobic and transphobic comments or bullying.
 - **Respect pronouns.** In Lesson 1, introduce yourself with your name and pronouns to create an environment where youth feel comfortable sharing if they choose. Never require youth to share their pronouns with the class, as they may not be out. If a student chooses to not share their pronouns, you can use their name instead. If you misgender someone, correct yourself and move on by saying, “I meant [insert correct pronoun].” Avoid over-apologizing as that can put students in a position where they feel social pressure to downplay the incident or comfort you, which is not their job.
 - **Always assume there are LGBTQ+ students in your class,** but never make assumptions about an individual student’s sexual orientation or gender identity. If a student shares their sexual orientation or gender identity with the class, listen to what they have to say, but never pressure them to share their experiences for the benefit of the classroom.
 - **Use language that accurately describes the experiences of people of all gender and sexual identities.** Discussing bodies and sexual health in a way that is inclusive of LGBTQ+ experiences means detaching gender from body parts because people of all genders can have any combination of body parts. Be intentional with the words you use and adapt them based on the topic. For example, if you’re talking about dental dam usage for oral sex with a

vagina, it would be appropriate to say “people with vaginas”. Whereas if you’re talking about contraceptive usage, you may use “ovary-bodied people” instead.

- **Be Cognizant that Someone in Your Class May be Pregnant or Parenting.** Do not use judgmental/disparaging language when talking about teen pregnancy/parenting. Be sensitive to how the term “roadblock” is applied to teen pregnancy. Teen pregnancy/parenting certainly introduces challenges to a teen’s ability to reach their future goals, but it doesn’t mean reaching those goals is impossible.
- **Support Students with Low Literacy.** Pair low-literacy students with other students who have the skills to help them understand activity instructions, worksheets, etc. Reduce the pace of your instruction, repeat instruction when needed, and allow for clarifying questions and answers. If the students struggle with reading, the facilitator can read aloud rather than have students read.

Answering Difficult Questions & Maintaining Boundaries

- **Clarify Understanding.** Think about the reason behind the comment or question. Is the learner trying to understand something better? Clarify misinformation? Looking for assurance that he/she is normal? Seek your permission to think or act in a certain way? Clarify his/her values? Shock or get a rise out of you? Understanding the reason behind the question can be helpful in formulating your response. Make sure you understand the question/comment before responding.
- **Find out What the Student/Class Already Knows.** Say something like: “Tell me first what you already know about ...” or “What have you heard about”. Additionally, invite other participants to help you in answering the question. Say something like: “What do other people in the group think about this question?”
- **Maintain Boundaries.** Be thoughtful, accurate and brief in your response. Do not express personal opinions to sway students. It is important that students have the opportunity to express their personal ideas, opinions, and experiences.
- **Say “I don’t know” When Appropriate.** A student may ask a question about contraception, sexually transmitted infections, or another topic that you may not know how to answer. It is perfectly acceptable to say you are not sure. Research the answer to the question and provide the student with an answer at the next lesson.

- **Acknowledge All Questions that Students Ask.** Facilitators should acknowledge and respect all questions from the students. One way to do this is to have an anonymous question box. This helps if students don't feel comfortable asking a question aloud, particularly for lessons that address consent, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and reproductive systems.

Trauma-Informed Practices

- **Establish Norms Around Dealing with Trauma Responses.** In addition to establishing group norms in Lesson 1, it is important that facilitators discuss up front what trauma is and some signs that indicate a person be having a trauma response. Facilitators should:
 1. Have a plan in place for youth who are triggered. Ideally, youth who are feeling triggered during a session could leave the room and be able to access help in working through what triggered them. If youth are not able to leave the room, or if there are not adults available to receive them, the facilitator could take a few minutes with the whole class to take some deep breaths together. Another option can be to put their head down for an activity.
 2. Before the program, identify a person (counselor, school nurse, other facilitator) who has the skills to help youth work through being triggered. Youth could be given the option to talk through their feelings, journal and reflect on their own, or do a mindful exercise (coloring, drawing, focus on breathing) that would help them process through what trigger them.
 3. Finally, make sure to have a list of resources, supports, and referrals available in the community.
- **Address disclosures of sexual abuse.** If a student discloses abuse, follow these steps:
 1. Acknowledge and thank the student for sharing. If a student begins disclosing sensitive information about themselves or someone else (e.g., experience with sexual abuse, finding out his girlfriend is pregnant, parent who has a substance abuse problem, etc.), remind the youth of your duty to report so they can make an informed choice about whether to continue sharing.
 2. Use active listening and empathy skills.
 3. Remember that if youth share information that makes you believe that an

- identifiable youth is being harmed or abused in a physical, sexual, or emotional manner, you almost assuredly have a legal duty to report the information to someone who can take appropriate action. Assure the student that issues related to violence, rape, and sexual abuse are never their fault.
4. Make appropriate referrals.
 5. Follow-up.
 6. Remember that facilitators are not therapists, lawyers, or health care providers. Stay within the bounds of your expertise, role, and responsibilities as a facilitator.

- **Avoid Language that may Shame Youth that have had Traumatic Sexual Experiences.**

When discussing making decisions about having sex, it is important to recognize that some youth may have been forced or coerced into having sex. Acknowledging that abuse is never the fault of the person being abused is important when talking about the choices that youth have about when and how they have sex. Not addressing this may inadvertently cause shame about boundary setting or ignoring warning signs.

- **Avoid Catching Youth Off Guard.** Provide information about lesson content up front to avoid youth being caught off guard by topics that may be reminders of adverse experiences or prior/continuing trauma. Consider providing a brief overview of the upcoming lesson at the end of each lesson, as well as a brief summary at the beginning of each lesson.

Classroom Management

- **Establish Group Agreements.** Group agreements can be a helpful tool to ensure a safer and more respectful learning environment, for the students and facilitators. When developing the group agreements, ask youth for their additions so they have buy-in. Post Group Agreements at every session. Remind participants of the group agreements as needed. Add to the list as needed.
- **Address Disrespectful Behavior.** Call out the behavior, not the student. Remind the perpetrating group or individual that they agreed to a set of group agreements. When appropriate, require that an apology be issued to the target of the mockery/teasing as appropriate, and identify the apology as a way of showing respect. Use positive reinforcement by complimenting the group for responding to your directives, modifying their behavior, and/or giving apologies to show each other respect

- **Give Youth a Positive Picture of Themselves.** Give positive reinforcement whenever possible. Unfortunately, many youth are used to being criticized, talked down to, and underappreciated. Assume the best of the youth with whom you are working. Let them know the importance of their in-put and constructive comments, and that you and the youth can learn from one another.
- **Regain Attention.** If a classroom loses focus due to laughter, side chatter, or a student who is “grandstanding”, use the following methods to bring attention back to the space:
 1. Use spatial proximity and touch (e.g., light touch to the shoulder) to change student behavior;
 2. Use stillness and vocal pauses to draw attention, and volume and changes to vocal patterns as signals to redirect attention;
 3. Encourage youth who are seeking attention to become your ally by publicly recognizing their strengths and giving them leadership roles (like handing out worksheets) in the classroom community that make use of these strengths;
 4. To address side chatter use a “pregnant pause” - stop instruction or discussion and wait for the side talk to stop while focusing your attention on those youth who are side talking. If this doesn’t work, move into a position right next to youth who are engaging in side talk, crouch down and quietly, without publicly “calling them out” or chastising them, tell them that you are having difficulty facilitating when they are side talking and ask them to stop.