

Skill Training | How To Stimulate Better Discussions

Five Keys to Stimulating Better Discussions

First, think ahead of time about where your members need to go...

You don't need to spend a lot of time on this, but it does help to think about the individual needs of your members as you're looking over the upcoming session. Although this is a challenge in a newer group, it gets easier the longer a group has been together and the more you know about your members. One way you can speed up the process is to have each of your members take the [Spiritual Health Assessment](#) and develop a [Health Plan](#). More info on this will be coming soon.

...and tailor the standard-issue questions in your upcoming session to fit the needs of your group.

Not as hard to do as it might seem. Often it's simply a matter of being aware of the needs of your members.

Second, learn to use guiding statements to keep the session headed in the right direction.

Guiding statements are simple modifications that can be dropped in right after the question. For example:

- “Let's each take 30 seconds to respond to this question.”
- “If you could summarize your feelings about this in just one word, what word would you use?”
- “What does this verse say to you? Boil your response down to one sentence.”
- “This is a good warm-up question. How about 2 of you giving us your answer.”

Third, rephrase the question and ask it again.

If the discussion drifts off topic, it can be redirected by rephrasing and taking a second pass.

Fourth, use redirecting statements as necessary.

You may feel a little awkward, but your members will appreciate your help keeping things on topic. For example:

- “That's a great topic, but it sounds like something we should discuss another time.”
- “Let's keep working on this question. We may have time for that one later.”

Fifth, recognize and celebrate each baby step along the way.

Affirm your members when they take a risk or make progress on the steps they need to take. For example:

- “Very insightful! Thank you for sharing that.”
- “Thank you for taking the important step of sharing your feelings with the group...”
- “We've taken some steps as a group tonight. I think all of us have acknowledged that we need to have a regular quiet time and we're ready to give it a try.”