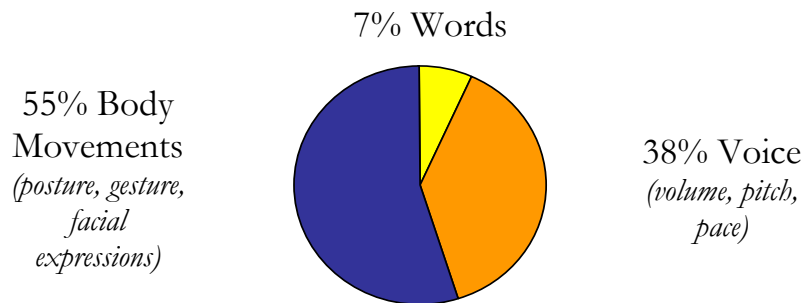


Facilitation Tips

1. Getting Confident

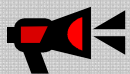
As the graph below demonstrates, much of what is communicated during a training is through the demeanor of the trainer herself. A trainer confident in both her words and her body language will be more effective in persuading the participants to trust the material. Two ways to increase your confidence are to demonstrate your credibility and minimize your stage fright.



Demonstrate Your Credibility

There are seven common steps you can take to ensure the participants view you as credible trainer. The steps are:

- ✓ Always be honest with the participants. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't make one up.
- ✓ Make your presentations balanced and as free from bias as possible.
- ✓ Make sure the audience knows you are the expert.
- ✓ Raise questions about the information yourself.
- ✓ Support the information with your own facts and experiences.
- ✓ Cite authorities that are accepted by your audience.
- ✓ Invite questions from the audience.



HINT: Remember, for all of these steps, it's not just what you say, it's how you say it: stand-up straight, speak with a big voice, and resist folding your arms across your chest.

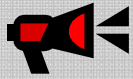
Minimizing your Stage Fright

If you are afraid of public speaking, you are not alone. Public speaking is the first on the list of U.S. residents' top ten worst fears.* The following tips can help you overcome your stage fright.

- ***Remember, you are prepared.*** Increase your confidence by reminding yourself that you have done all you can to be prepared.
- ***Release Tension.*** One of the best ways to do this is take deep breaths. Breathe from your diaphragm and remember to exhale all the way. It also helps to exercise regularly, as unused energy may come out as anxiety.
- ***Rehearse.*** Before holding a screening, visualize yourself succeeding. If you imagine success you are more likely to be successful.
- ***Know the room and your equipment.*** Finish testing your audio visual equipment and be completely set up by the time participants arrive.

* David Wallechinsky, et al. The Book of Lists (New York: Wm. Morrow & Co., Inc., 1977).

- **Know the attendees.** Talk to people as they arrive – it is easier to speak in front of people you are familiar with than a group of strangers.
- **Reassure Yourself.** The attendees are not there to see you perform; they are there to learn the material and get engaged in action. People are not scrutinizing you or waiting for you make a mistake. Most likely, they want you to succeed because that means an interesting training for them.



HINT: *Don't apologize for your nervousness or mistakes; just keep moving through the material. Apologizing can call the audience's attention to something they didn't even notice.*

- **Re-frame.** Feeling nervous and feeling excited are very similar. Harness your nervous energy and turn it into enthusiasm.
- **Resist imitating another's style.** Be natural and relaxed. Only use others' techniques if you can do it without thinking. Concentrating on presenting like someone else takes your focus away from the material, which creates anxiety.
- **Know your first line and the transition to the main point.** Memorizing the introduction to the training can dissipate anxiety and help you begin with confidence.
- **Concentrate on the message, not yourself.** Try as hard as possible to turn your attention outward. Focus on what you are there to do: engage the participants in the material so they can learn.
- **Rest up and eat well.** Trainings and screenings requires a lot of energy, enthusiasm and focus. Being on your toes for several hours can be mentally and emotionally exhausting, so get plenty of rest and nutrition so that you are physically and psychologically alert.

2. Facilitating Discussion

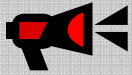
Screenings and interactive trainings are more effective than lectures because the participants' involvement and experiences are actually a part of the learning process. Actively engaged participants are more likely to recall and use the information outside of the confines of the training. However, leading an active training is hard and requires solid facilitation skills. This section covers a number of facilitation techniques that you might find helpful.

Leading vs. Directing

The key to facilitating effectively is to remember that your role is to lead the discussion, not direct it. As a leader, you should focus on drawing ideas out of the participants, rather than dominating with your ideas and experiences. The following are tips to help you remember to facilitate rather than direct:

- **Be respectful.** Demonstrate this respect by calling attendees by their names and listening actively.
- **Be enthusiastic about the topic and the training program.** Display your enthusiasm by leaning towards attendees when they are speaking.
- **Ask and encourage questions and idea sharing.** Do not use destructive language, such as, "That's wrong," when responding.
- **Be clear and direct.** This means give examples and avoid the passive voice, such as, "Health inequities are revealed by the data," instead of "The data reveals health inequities."
- **Keep your own contributions during group discussions brief.** Let attendees respond to questions and to one another first. If they answer a question completely, you, the facilitator, need not add additional information.

- **Use silence to give people time to think about an answer or response to a question before you give them “the answers.”** Count to ten. If you don’t get any responses from the attendees, rephrase the question and count to ten again. Then, prompt the group with an answer and ask for others.



HINT: *Breaking into smaller groups for discussion is a good way to give quieter participants a chance to share their ideas and ask questions they might be too nervous to ask in front of the entire group.*

- **Encourage the participation of people who have been quiet.** One way to do this is to state the participant’s name first and ask the participant an opinion question with no correct answer. You can avoid putting the participant on the spot by asking a question you know she or he can easily respond to.

Asking Questions

It is incumbent upon the trainers to pose stimulating and intriguing questions or topics for discussion. Below are some tips for asking questions that yield powerful responses.*

- **Use open-ended questions that encourage answers beyond yes or no.**
Closed question: Did you like the training?
Open-ended question: What did you like about the training?
- **Ask honest and relevant questions.** Begin by engaging people around what they know.
- **Use “think back” questions.** When trying to engage people in a discussion about their experiences, ask them to remember their past instead of imagine a hypothetical situation.
- **Ask clear and concise questions.** Make sure your questions only cover one issue at a time.
- **Use unbiased questions.** Phrase questions in a way that does not betray your opinion and that does not guide the people to answer one way or another.



HINT: *If no one is responding to your questions, remember to try and ask it a different way. If that does not work, try prompting the group with an answer.*

- **Avoid asking “why.”** When asked why they think something or feel a certain way, people can become defensive for many reasons; they might not have an answer, they might not want to share their answer, or they might feel as though they do not need to justify what they believe. Instead of asking someone why they believe something, try asking them what experiences led them to that conclusion, to give examples, or other strategies that will help draw out more information.

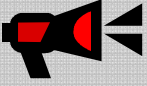
Answering Questions

As a facilitator, one of the most common questions you will ask is, “Does anyone have any questions?” If, in response, you are asked questions you think the group can answer, redirect them to the group to encourage active learning. If you are the only person who can answer the question, use the following tips:

- **You’re asked a question that you can’t answer.** Don’t be defensive or fake it, just say you don’t know or ask to get back to the person later.
- **You’re asked an extensive question.** Break the question down into smaller parts and keep your answer as concise as possible without omitting key details.

* These question guidelines are taken from the CAPE “Focus Group Training Manual,” January, 2006

- **You're asked a question you already answered.** Try again and if the questioner still doesn't understand, but the rest of the group looks bored, ask to talk about it in more detail after the training.
- **You're asked a question you think is stupid.** Remember, not everyone is as familiar with the material as you are. Be patient.
- **You're asked a controversial question.** This is good, it means people are thinking critically. Take your time in answering, don't be pressured into saying anything you don't mean.
- **You're asked a hostile question.** Stay calm. Rise above it by sticking to the issues.



HINT: *Sometimes you may need a few seconds to collect your thoughts before answering a question. Several strategies for taking this time while staying engaged with the participants include repeating the question back to the participant, asking for clarification, or asking the participant to repeat the question because you are not sure if you heard it completely.*

- **You're asked a question you don't want to answer.** Say so, and, when appropriate, offer to meet with the person later to discuss your response. If everyone at the training wants you to respond, you should consider the reasons why and how it may be either useful or detrimental to the training.
- **You're asked a dichotomous question.** A dichotomous question is one for which you can answer with a simple "yes" or "no." Instead of giving a one word answer, try to add some detail to let the questioner know that you don't think the question is inconsequential.

Encouraging People

Encouraging people is how you create an open space for people to participate without putting any one individual on the spot. Encouraging is especially helpful during the early stages of the discussion, while people are still warming up. As people become more engaged, they do not need as much encouragement to participate. The following are some encouragement techniques:

| How to encourage | Examples |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Don't agree or disagree. | "Who else has an idea?" |
| Use neutral words. | "Is there a perspective on this issue from someone in a different unit?" |
| Use varying voice intonations. | "Does anyone have a "personal story" you are willing to share relating to this issue?" |
| | "Is this discussion raising questions for anyone?" |
| | "What was said at the end of the room?" |
| | "Can you tell me more?" |

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a fundamental listening skill. Paraphrasing has a calming effect, as it relieves speakers of their anxiety that they are neither being listened to nor understood, and it reminds the speaker their ideas are worth listening to. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for the speaker to hear how her ideas are being heard so she can ensure that they are being interpreted the way she intended. The following are techniques to keep in mind:

| How to paraphrase | Examples |
|--|--|
| Use your own words to say what you think the speaker said. | Preface your paraphrase with a comment like: |
| If the speaker's statement is one or two sentences, use roughly the same number when you paraphrase. | “It sounds to me you are saying...” “This is what I am hearing you say...” “Let me see if I understand...” |
| If the speaker's statement is very long, summarize it. | When you have completed the paraphrase, prompt for the speaker's reaction with a statement like: “Did I get that right?” If the speaker does not feel she was understood correctly, ask for clarification. |

Clarifying

Clarifying is a way of giving people the support they need to refine their ideas. It can be used to better understand what was said, to get more information, and to help the speaker see other points of view. It sends the speaker the message, “I am with you; I understand you so far. Now tell me a little more.” Additionally, it lets the speaker know that their ideas are worth exploring and that the group will give the time needed to allow her to get her ideas all the way out. In order to decide whether or not an idea needs to be clarified, ask yourself, “Do I think I understand the core of what s/he is trying to say.” If the answer is “no,” attempt to clarify. The following are techniques useful for clarifying ideas.

| How to clarify | Examples |
|---|--|
| Paraphrase the speaker's statement and then ask a clarifying question. | The speaker says, “I think it is fair to say that most people would be uncomfortable with the change.” The listener says, “So, you are saying most people would not like the change. Can you give me an example of what you mean?” |
| Restate a wrong interpretation to force the speaker to explain further. | Other clarifying questions include: “Can you say more about that?” “What do you mean by...?” |
| Use varying voice intonations. | Instead of asking a question, you can paraphrase the speaker, adding something like “Because...”, “And...” or “So...” at the end of the sentence. “You are saying to wait, because...” |

3. Difficult Situations

Discussion Dominators

If someone is doing a lot of the talking it may prevent others from contributing their thoughts, which limits their active learning. Although it may seem intimidating, it can be very easy to reduce the amount of sharing coming from one participant.

- ✓ Wait for a pause in her speaking, such as when she takes a breath, respectfully acknowledge her contribution, and thank her. You can say something like, “I really appreciate your comments.”
- ✓ Then make direct eye contact with other people and ask something like, “I’m very interested in hearing how other people are feeling about this issue” or “It’s very interesting to get a variety of perspectives, and I would like to hear from other people as well.”

No Response

Every facilitator has stood before a group that stares at her blankly after she asked what she thought was a very simple question. Even questions that stimulated the most interesting discussions with one group can fall completely flat with another. In this kind of situation, it is helpful to try to understand why people are not responding.

- ***Did you ask a question that was difficult to understand?*** If so, rephrase or reword the question in a way that ensures that salient issues are explored.
- ***Are people tired of talking about the topic and/or do they have no more to say about a topic?*** In this case, it may be important to simply state, “Is there anything else that you would like to share? [pause] If not, we can move on.” If you, as the facilitator, think you haven’t gotten all of the information you want on that topic, rather than trying to force the issue, just be aware that there may be an opportunity to elicit salient information through probing that occurs with respect to other questions.
- ***Are participants bored of discussions and need more stimulating activities to get them thinking?*** Even though a screening stimulates visual learners, it might not be enough. For instance, there may be times when you are conducting a screening after a particularly exhausting week for many people and so they are dragging. Instead of trying to force the training as you planned it, transform the discussions into activities.



HINT: *The following website has a lot of good suggestions on how to turn discussions into activities:*
<http://www.businesstrainingworks.com/Onsite%20Training%20Web/Free%20Articles/PDFs/Active%20Training%20and%20Teaching.pdf>

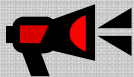
- ***Are people feeling uncomfortable about talking?*** This typically occurs at the beginning of a screening and is less likely to occur when the facilitator is able to set a comfortable tone and put people at ease in the beginning. If, however, this continues to be an issue during the training, talk about easier topics, things that you think people may be more familiar with or comfortable talking about, or, perhaps, things that you know are particularly interesting to them. If no one responds to a question, and you aren’t sure exactly what the problem is, it’s okay sometimes to just wait it out. Be quiet for a moment and allow people time to think. Often, someone will speak up, either to answer the question or to ask a question that allows you to better understand the silence.

Off-topic Discussions

When the group begins to talk about issues not relevant to the training, you might take advantage of a pause and say, “Thank you for that interesting idea. Perhaps we can discuss it in a separate session. For the purposes of exploring further the specific topics that are the focus of this discussion, with your consent, I would like to move on.”

Side Conversations

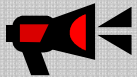
One of the best ways to handle a situation in which some people are having a private discussion is to address it before the training begins, when you set ground rules. Stress that it is *very* important not to have side conversations because it interferes with individual’s full participation in the group discussion. If side conversations occur anyways, do not stop the discussion abruptly. Unless a side conversation is so distracting it absolutely cannot be ignored, do not interrupt a speaker in order to ask others to quiet down; this may make the speaker lose her train of thought and can disrupt the flow of the discussion. Instead, wait until the speaker has finished and respond to the person first. Then, you might respectfully remind people of the ground rules and ask that people finish their conversations and rejoin the larger group discussion.



HINT: *This kind of disruption may also signal that it is time to take a break, and you may want to suggest no more than a five minute break. It will be important to make sure people know at what time the training will continue and be proactive about bringing people back together so that the training can continue.*

Interpersonal Conflict

If two or more people in the group begin arguing with each other in an unproductive manner, you must confront the situation before it spirals out of control. You can try to defuse the situation with humor, or give the people an easy way out of the argument by reframing what they are saying and moving on. If this does not work, direct the whole group to the ground rules. If one group member continues to target attacks at one person, ask that person specifically to respect the ground rules. If the conflict continues, address the problem directly, asking for any underlying reasons that might be fueling the conflict. Finally, if that does not work, speak to the person or persons involved separate from the group.



HINT: *Again, this kind of disruption may also signal that it is time to take a break. During the break, go and talk to the participants involved in the conflict and see if there is something you can do to calm them down and resolve the conflict before the break ends.*

Rambling Discussion

In order to get through a whole agenda, some discussions need to be curtailed, even when they are productive and interesting. When a discussion has gone on for too long, you can jump in when someone takes a breath and comment on the quality of the discussion, but add that it is time to move on. Summarize the key points and offer to resume the discussion later if there is time. (Congratulate yourself on successfully engaging the participants!)