

The Process of Group Communication



the goal

Many people struggle with the confidence to participate in a group discussion. The students need to learn how to interject themselves into a group discussion in a confident and assertive manner. The students also need to know and understand that there are rules around the process of communicating within a group in regard to topic, language, and timing.

the objective



This exercise will help the students learn how to become part of a group conversation. It will also set rules for participating in a group discussion.

exercise

1 Select a student and instruct them to say the first thing that comes to his or her mind for the following statements. Tell the student that he or she only has three seconds to answer, and that there are no right or wrong answers (make a note of the questions not answered quickly):

- Who do you think will be in the Super Bowl this year?
- Who's your favorite singer?
- What is your favorite movie?
- What's your favorite brand of shoes?
- Do you think the President is doing a good job?
- What is your hardest class?
- What is your favorite class?
- What kind of food do you like?
- What do you do for fun?

2 After the student has answered each question, point out that he or she has opinions in most areas, but there are some in which he or she is not as knowledgeable.

- 3 Explain that this is natural. Everyone has knowledge about the things that are important to them.
- 4 Point out that your questions covered sports, entertainment, clothing, politics, school, food, and fun. Even though these questions were not very hard or very deep, they did cover a wide variety of topics.
- 5 Explain that by answering the questions in a quick manner, the student appears to have opinions about the topic addressed. By not answering other questions as quickly, it indicates that the student is not as opinionated about those topics.
- 6 Take the student back to the questions answered quickly and with confidence. Point out that he or she was able to answer a question about each topic, while under the duress of a time constraint.
- 7 Now point out that by adding the simple word “why” to the end of each sentence, it goes from a simple question to the beginning of a conversation. Demonstrate by re-asking two of the questions, and then have the student explain his or her position by answering why.
- 8 After the student has completed this exercise, point out to all the students that there are topics of conversation many of us are comfortable with and have opinions about. Therefore, when these topics are discussed in a group, we are armed for participation.
- 9 Point out that the students have the knowledge to enter a group discussion on certain subjects. Also point out that there are likely topics of conversation they should be more of a listener than contributor. Explain that this is applicable to anyone. The best way to be a group conversationalist is to know when to talk and when to listen.
- 10 Explain that since the students have opinions about subjects and has the ability to answer questions and discuss these subjects, they are capable of interjecting themselves into any group discussion about these topics. However, this is often easier said than done.
- 11 Ask the students why they think it is hard to join in on a discussion with a group of people, even when they have opinions and are knowledgeable about what is being discussed.

12 Affirm that many people struggle with the dynamics of talking in a large group of people. The struggle is centered on an individual's confidence in the ability to participate, without either embarrassing themselves or not adding value to the conversation.

13 Explain that there are two ways to get over the fear of participating in a group conversation:

Knowledge – if the student listens to what is said, he or she can determine whether he or she knows enough to join the conversation. If he or she does, then jump in. If not, then maybe he or she is better off listening and learning.

Practice – The only way to get over a fear is to face it. This doesn't mean that he or she should find the biggest group, jump in, and become the focal point. Instead, it means to practice with friends, to participate in classroom discussion where the topic is known and the environment is controlled, and to place himself or herself in situations where he or she is comfortable talking. Explain that comfort will come with familiarity.

14 Ask the students to affirm their ability to become part of a conversation where a known topic is being discussed. Ask for a direct admission of their ability to participate.

15 Now explain that it is great the students realize that they have the ability and knowledge to participate in a group discussion, but there are rules they need to know and understand.

16 Ask the students to list the rules they can think of for being a part of a group discussion. List these rules and discuss each rule as it is listed. After the students have finished add any of the following that are missing:

- **Language** – your language cannot be offensive to group participants or observers.
- **Topic** – the topic you discuss should not be offensive to group participants or observers.
- **Personal Space** – you must observe and respect the personal space of each group participant.
- **Timing** – you must listen and learn the proper time to enter a conversation, as well as the proper time to be quiet and listen.
- **Sharing** – being part of a group discussion means other people are talking. You must know when it is time to let others talk.
- **Touching** – you must know the boundaries of touching any member of the group, and whether your touch would be welcomed, necessary, or offensive.
- **Continuity** – you should respect the group discussion and not jump in and try to change the topic, simply because you do not want to discuss or listen.
- **Confidence** – you should speak with confidence if you want to be taken seriously.

17 Review each of these rules with the students. Talk about the consequences for breaking any of the rules.

18 Talk about how becoming offensive or rude in a group conversation can be magnified with the number of participants.

19 Finally, talk about how a group is made up of individuals. Each person has an opinion, and his or her opinion is worth no more than the students'. Contrarily, their opinion is worth no **less** than others.

20 Tell the students that they now know how to become part of a group conversation and discussion. Now if they will practice and adhere to a couple of rules, confidence in their abilities will grow..

summary

Being part of a group discussion can be harrowing for many people. A lack of confidence in both speaking ability and knowledge keeps these people sitting on the side, when in fact they could be contributors to the discussion. The students need to know what they know, so that they can participate when they have something to contribute. They also need to know the rules for participating in a group discussion, so that they do not become rude, offensive and/or embarrassed by the process.



outcomes

and hints



When the students are answering the beginning questions, take note of the questions answered quickly and the topics they appear to find most interesting.

When discussing the difficulties of group discussions, share a personal example of a time when you were either fearful or not confident enough to interject yourself into the conversation.

As the rules of group conversation are discussed, ask the students to give personal interpretations of the consequences of each rule. Remind the students to think not only of the group participants, but also of the people who might hear the conversation from afar.

talking

points

- Talk about the natural tendency of people to be timid about jumping into a group and talking.
- Talk about the students' self-worth and their ability to use knowledge to contribute to a group discussion.
- Talk about how the respect the students show in a group will be reciprocated by the group on an equal level.



probing

questions



- Do you think it is hard or easy to jump into a group discussion? Why?
- What group of people do you feel comfortable talking with? Why?
- What are the consequences for becoming rude or offensive during a group discussion?



Skills Lesson Recap



the goal

Many people struggle with the confidence to participate in a group discussion. Today you learned how to interject yourself into a group discussion in a confident and assertive manner. You also learned that there are rules for the process of communicating with a group in regard to topic, language, and timing.

key points

exercise

- The instructor led you through an exercise that pointed out the fact that you have opinions in most areas of discussion.
- Your instructor pointed out that there are certain conversational topics that you will feel knowledgeable of and therefore should participate in as well as some that you will not. You learned when to enter into a discussion and give your thoughts on the subject versus when to sit back and just listen to what others have to say.
- You discussed why you think it is difficult to join in on a conversation even when you are knowledgeable and comfortable about the subject being talked about.
- Along with assistance from the instructor you listed what you thought were the most important rules for being a part of a group discussion.

consequence of not

Neglecting to utilize these skills taught will cause you to continually struggle with participating within group discussions.

using this skill



benefits

of using this skill

By successfully implementing these skills you will find yourself becoming more confident at knowing how and when to enter a group discussion.

The Process of Group Communication - part 1

Answer the following by writing the first answer that comes to mind:

Who do you think will be in the Superbowl?	
Who is your favorite singer?	
What is your favorite movie?	
What is your favorite brand of shoes?	
Do you think the President is doing a good job?	
What is your hardest class?	
What is your favorite class?	
What kind of food do you like?	
What do you do for fun?	

Pick 2 of the questions from above and answer "why?" to each.

1. _____
2. _____

Why do you think it is hard to join in on a discussion with a group of people, even when you have opinions and are knowledgeable about what is being discussed

What are two ways to get over the fear of participating in a group discussion?

1. _____
2. _____

Name some of the topics that would enable you to participate in a group conversation.

Student: _____ Facilitator: _____ Date: _____

The Process of Group Communication - part 2

List the rules for participating in a group discussion:

RULES	CONSEQUENCES FOR BREAKING THE RULES

Student: _____ Facilitator: _____ Date: _____