



Exercise – Setting Common Rules for Group Work

Methodology: Prior to any group process, it is helpful to engage the group in setting its own set of common “ground rules” for the training. This provides a way to help you—the facilitator—as well as the group, to create rules that the group is willing to follow. It will help you and members of the group monitor behavior to ensure the maximum participation and respect of everyone present. Ground rules also help focus and motivate the group to achieve their common objectives.

Objectives:

- To help people feel safe
- To create an equitable learning environment based on mutual respect
- To collectively establish basic rules and structure for the workshop

Getting Ready:

In order to prepare the group for this activity you may want to ask all participants to sit in a circle of chairs. As the facilitator, you will need to have a flip chart (large piece of paper) and a felt marker pen. This should be a quick exercise, taking approximately **10 minutes**.

Facilitation Note:

This exercise will allow the group to establish its own set of rules and principles for the workshop. When self-generated, rules are more likely to be followed by the group. If participants do not respect the rules at some point during the workshop, you can refer back to the rules agreed upon to re-center behavior. Consider having a prepared list (or suggestions) to help the group move faster. You may also want to suggest to the group that they identify one or two people (preferably a man and a woman) who the participants can go to if a problem or a case of harassment or discomfort arises.

The Group Exercise Process:

1. Ask the group what would help create a safe learning environment for everyone in the group.
2. Ask what their concerns are for the workshop.
3. Ask what rules they would like to adhere to.
4. As facilitator, be sure to see that principles such as respect for all participants, no harassment, only one person talking at a time, speaking from an “I” perspective, etc. are all included.
5. Make sure you ask the group for agreement before you proceed to write down each rule on the flip chart paper.

Reflection and Sharing:

- To close the process, ask the group: “Can we all agree to live by these rules for the duration of the workshop? If yes, please raise your hand.”
- Ask if there are any objections. If so, be sure to take the time to process the objections with the group.
- Proceed **ONLY** after a set list of ground rules has been agreed upon by the group.

Source: Exercise written by Phillippe Duhamel for the New Tactics Asia Regional Workshop, August 2005.

