USING STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES FOR WORKING WITH GROUPS

Working with groups is vital to creating community change, but group facilitation is a skill that develops from experience. Young people may lack the experience that comes from years of practice, but adults can help them develop group skills by using structured activities.

Structured activities are techniques that enable people to start things off, get acquainted, reduce inhibitions, raise consciousness, clarify values, provide feedback, and make transitions from one part of the program to another. They can provide meaningful participation in a low-risk way, an opportunity to test ideas and learn from others, and a source of support for better problem solving. They usually take a small amount of time, little advance preparation, are simple to implement, and are flexible enough to be used with an unlimited range of topics.

For example, what difference does it make if the group is large or small in size, or if group members sit in rows or circles, or if they have a spokesperson and a recorder to post the results on large newsprint paper?

Using structured activities effectively will depend upon the composition and expectations of the group, the nature and length of the program, the culture of the community, and the style and personality of the facilitator.

CHECKLIST OF STRUCTURED GROUP ACTIVITIES

How would you assess your present level in using the following structured group activities? Put a check before ones you feel adequate in using, two checks before ones you need to practice, and three checks before ones with which you are unfamiliar and want more information.

- Icebreakers
- Using dyads and triads (groups of two and three)
- Developing lists
- Sharing personal incidents
- Buzz groups
- Fishbowls
- Role-playing
- Using games and simulations
- Small-group exercises
- Team-building
- Flipcharting
- Using handouts
- Learning from case studies

Excerpt from “Adults as Allies.” http://www.wkkf.org/pubs/YouthED/Pub564.pdf