

WYMAN
Transforming Teens. Changing Communities.

Approaching Sensitive Topics: Creating a Safe & Inclusive Space for Youth

Arizona Department of Health Services
Adolescent Health Professional Development Conference



Introductions


WYMAN

hello

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Graffiti Wall

WYMAN








What Does Safe Space
Look/Feel/Sound Like?

4 Techniques to Create Safe Space W Y M A N






-  **Ground Rules**
-  **Routine & Structure**
-  **Group Culture**
-  **Facilitate & Model**

Ground Rules W Y M A N

- Establish at beginning, then reinforce
- Create an environment where youth: feel heard, are respectful of each other and there is a sense of confidentiality that encourages sharing
- Support group processes and model healthy sharing of emotions

Ground Rules Work Best When... W Y M A N








- Establish at beginning
- Coach and remind until group members begin to remind/enforce with one another
- Emphasize importance of confidentiality (including limits of confidentiality)
- Model consistency

Let's Apply...Which Support Safe Space? W Y M A N



Routines & Structure W Y M A N




- Structure program with routines, activities, culture, etc.
- Provide structured and predictable experience
- Establishing a predictable environment can be reassuring


Let's Apply...Which Support Safe Space? W Y M A N



Group Culture W Y M A N








Facilitators should support safe space by facilitating the creation of a group culture with the understanding that all members are different, equal and important and that members of the group will actively care for, appreciate and include each other.



Facilitators should model and encourage interactions based on understanding and appreciation of one another's views, experiences and values.

LGBTQ Inclusivity W Y M A N








- Use terms like “people” rather than “boys” or “girls”
- Use gender-neutral terms, for example:
 - “person with a penis” instead of “male”
 - “external condom” instead of “male condom”
- Include positive examples of diverse, LGBTQ relationships.
- Do not label or make assumptions about people or groups, like assuming a girl will have boyfriend


Let's Apply...Which Support Safe Space? W Y M A N



Facilitate & Model W Y M A N



Teaching teens
***HOW* to think, not**
WHAT to think.




"How to Think, Not What to Think" Frame W Y M A N


Facilitator Should:

- Not share their personal values
- Not present any value as "better" or "best"
- Not adopt or assume a shared values context for the group
- Show support for teens expressing opinions different from the majority of the group
- Bring up viewpoints not brought up by the group
- Uphold "universal values" of health and safety

Facilitate & Model W Y M A N



Healthy teen-adult relationships are teen-centered and focused, not adult-centered and focused.



Facilitators should not share sensitive personal information including sexual experiences, drug/alcohol use, trauma, etc.

Facilitate & Model

W Y M A N

Even if we have good intentions, sharing sensitive personal information can negatively affect our relationship with a teen and/or their experience in program.

- There are a variety of reasons for this:
 - A facilitator's sharing may influence participants. Participants may think, "They did it and turned out okay..."
 - Participants may develop the idea that they are "too different" from the facilitator or group and feel judged, isolated or hesitant to talk to the facilitator in the future.
 - Related to trauma, a facilitator's sharing may be triggering for a participant or influence participants to feel they need to take care of the facilitator.
 - The facilitator's experiences may create a distraction from teens' own experiences and development.

Facilitate & Model: If/When You Share

W Y M A N

Be Intentional About Sharing:





- If youth are hesitant to share first, the facilitator may share to start the conversation.
- Give examples from when you were an adolescent or close to that age. This is most relatable to participants.
- If a youth is willing to go first, the facilitator should step back and allow the youth to share.
- If there is an extended pause in youth sharing, the facilitator may step up and share to continue dialogue.
- If youth are comfortable sharing and discussion is flowing, the facilitator may not need to share at all.

Let's Apply...Which Support Safe Space?

W Y M A N





Responding to Questions from Teens W Y M A N










Types of Questions from Teens W Y M A N


 **Questions Seeking Information**

 **Value-Laden Questions**

 **Personal Question**

 **Am I Normal Questions**

Types of Questions from Teens W Y M A N

 **Questions Seeking Information**

- Be honest.
- Answer questions age-appropriately.
- Don't give too much or unnecessary information.
- If you aren't sure what the young person is really asking (in verbal questions only), you might ask, "What have you heard about that?" "Can you tell me what you already know about that?"
- After answering the question, you might ask, "Does that answer the question?" Or, if you want to check their understanding, ask them to tell you what they understand.

Types of Questions from Teens W Y M A N

? **Value-Laden Questions**

- Do not impose your own personal values.
- Do enforce universal values (exploitation is wrong, responsibility is good, etc.)
- Discuss the range of values regarding a specific issue.
- Encourage youth to discuss values with their parent(s) or an adult in their family.
- If youth bring up a value and only discuss one point of view, it is helpful for you to point out that there are other points of view as well.

Types of Questions from Teens W Y M A N

? **Personal Questions**


- Never discuss your personal sexual experiences, drug/alcohol use, trauma history, etc. with a teen.
- Feel free not to answer personal questions.
- Use your judgment to answer harmless personal questions.
- If you do choose to answer a question, be honest!

Types of Questions from Teens W Y M A N


? **Am I Normal Questions**

- Discuss the RANGE of "normal."
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication.
- Try not to let "shock-value" questions actually shock you.
- It is okay to let youth know that a question is a bit embarrassing.
- Allow youth to ask questions in their own language. When you answer, use scientific language.


Stop, Drop and Roll W Y M A N



Stop: Stop talking and think about the question you've been asked




Drop: Drop your opinions, personal judgements, values, etc.




Roll: Roll the question into a discussion topic for the group


Other Tools & Techniques W Y M A N



SOY: "Some...Others...You..."



Rock & a Hard Place: "If I answer this way..., If I answer that way..."



Pass: "That's a personal question. I'm going to pass."

Let's Apply...Which Support Safe Space? W Y M A N



