Training for the Non-Trainer: Tips and Tools

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Background

In U.S. refugee resettlement, orientation is sometimes provided by people with little or no experience or training in orientation delivery. Fortunately, orientations and trainings can be delivered effectively by non-trainers, but careful pre-session planning is key to meeting the goals of both the trainer and the clients. This document has been developed to provide inexperienced trainers, or those who simply want a training refresher, with useful tips and suggestions.

Orientation Versus Training

An *orientation* introduces refugees to an unfamiliar idea or situation, such as a new home, while a *training* focuses on specific knowledge, skills, or attitudes, such as how to interview for a job in a new or better way. *Cultural/community orientation* for refugees combines both of these elements: It introduces refugees to their new environment and equips them to deal successfully with it.

The Training Cycle

For an effective orientation program or training, follow the five steps of successful trainers:

Assess Needs and Interests

A needs assessment guides you in developing goals to meet the needs of everyone involved. A needs assessment should take into account the trainer's requirements, participant needs and interests, and input from previously resettled communities and the community at large. A needs assessment will enable you to do the following:

- Explore participant views, knowledge, and needs regarding the topic
- Identify what participants already know, and what they want and need to learn
- Identify other factors (e.g., ethnicity, age, and language) that may affect the trainings
- Identify resources you might need

In the best-case scenario, trainers conduct a needs assessment prior to the orientation session. However, a brief **needs assessment** can be conducted at the beginning of the session.

1

Define the Goals, Objectives, and Content

Define the goals and gather and analyze information based on your needs assessment. You can begin by identifying your major goals and then the objectives, or smaller steps, needed to reach those goals. For example, would you like participants to understand and retain knowledge, gain practical skills, develop a new attitude toward an issue, or some combination of the three? Finally, you should identify what participants need to know and understand in order to meet the goals.

2

Design the Program

Design the program based on your goals and objectives and on the resources found during the needs assessment. Think about the following:

- The amount of time available (hours, days)
- The content to be addressed and learned
- The most effective ways to address different elements of the content (see **Methods** on the following page)
- The group size that is most effective for specific topics (individuals, pairs, small groups, large group)

Develop an outline of the session and the resources you will use. From the outline, create lesson plan(s) using a **lesson design template**. Don't forget to plan adequate time for welcome, introductions, **icebreakers**, breaks, discussion, debriefing, reflection, evaluation and so forth. Make a list of needed materials (e.g., paper, pens, markers, tape, handouts, laptops, extension cords, nametags).

3

Facilitate the Program

Give yourself some time before the training to set up your materials, check all equipment, and make sure the space is in the **most effective arrangement** for your purposes. The introduction should include a welcome, introductions, goals (of everyone in attendance), an icebreaker, logistics (such as the location of restrooms), and an overview of the day's agenda, including break times. To grab people's interest and promote interaction, begin the entire session with an icebreaking activity relevant to the topic.

Here are some things to do to achieve a successful training:

- Decide how much you want to be talking. How much information will come from you, and how much will come from the participants?
- Use selected methods to get and keep participants actively engaged.
- Discuss and debrief often, and regularly check for understanding by asking participants to respond to questions or paraphrase the information already conveyed. If participants do not understand, explain the idea using different words or visuals.
- Use quick icebreakers involving movement when participants appear tired or bored.
- Conduct formal and informal evaluations throughout.

4

Evaluate the Program

Evaluation throughout a training session can help you adjust your delivery to better accomplish your goals. Pay attention to the participants. Are they bored or dozing? Get them on their feet for an icebreaker. Do they have questions? Answer immediately if time permits; if not, use the **Parking Lot** technique. Are they uncomfortable with the topic? Adjust your treatment by addressing the topic less directly.

Evaluation at the end of a session or afterwards can help you determine how to modify future trainings or even how to follow up with the current group. Trainers often choose to have participants complete a written survey immediately after a session, but informal chats with participants can also help you identify strengths and weaknesses of the session.

5

Methods

Using a variety of methods during a training or orientation session will enable you to get your messages across and hold participant interest more effectively. Here are some suggested methods and their purposes:

- **Brainstorming** to identify new ideas and explore attitudes
- **Case Studies** to identify solutions based on real-life situations
- **Debates** to explore different points of view
- **Demonstrations** to explain or teach skills
- **Discussion** to share knowledge and explore options
- **Field Trips** to give hands-on experience and to learn about and explore new environments
- **Games** to allow real-life application of skills and to engage participants
- **Lectures** to convey information in brief periods of time
- **Parking Lot** to postpone questions not directly relevant to the topic at hand
- **Reflection** to debrief sessions and to conduct evaluation
- **Role-Plays** to identify solutions and to engage participants
- **Simulations** to identify solutions and to engage participants
- **Videos** to provide visuals and enhance discussions

For more information on this topic, see **Methods in Training**.

Creating a Safe Space

Trainers hope that participants will reflect on what they have learned and apply it to their own lives. This is more likely to happen when trainers create a physical learning space where participants feel comfortable expressing themselves. Here are three ways to foster the creation of a safe space:

- Use a non-hierarchical seating configuration, such as a circle.
- Alternate large group discussions with small-group or pair work to give all participants the chance to express themselves.
- Vary seating arrangements according to group preferences. Some groups may feel more comfortable sitting on the floor, while others may prefer to sit on chairs; the use of tables is also optional.

Evaluations

Evaluations can be conducted formally or informally, in writing or orally. Here are some ways to evaluate your session:

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Have participants relay information about the session in their own words to you or someone else.
- Informally observe actions or discussion.
- Conduct a survey at the end of the session or later on.
- Have participants tell a story, draw a picture, or perform a role play.
- Pose questions for small groups to discuss.

Training Do's and Don'ts*

Do:

- Introduce yourself.
- Show respect to participants.
- Foster participation and movement.
- Watch and listen to participants.
- Adapt, improvise, and be flexible.
- Be honest and share.
- Accept error and learn from mistakes.
- Be open to learning from participants.
- Abandon preconceptions.
- Show your own enthusiasm.
- Have fun and enjoy the session.
- Reflect on the session.

Don't:

- Rush.
- Lecture excessively.
- Dominate.
- Interrupt.
- Criticize.
- Take yourself too seriously.

* From *Participatory workshops* by Chambers, 2002.

Visual Aids

Visual aids attract the attention of participants and clarify meaning. Consider which aids are best suited to your message and your audience. Here are some common visual aids:

- PowerPoints
- Posters
- Pamphlets
- Brief video clips (generally 2–3 minutes)
- Drawings
- Flipcharts

Soothing Tensions

It is not uncommon for newly resettled refugees to express frustration or even anger during an orientation session that introduces them to unfamiliar situations and ideas. How can you as a trainer best deal with these emotions? First, give participants the opportunity to express their unhappiness for as long as time permits and other participants remain engaged. (You don't want to lose the interest of others entirely.) Then explain to participants that while their concerns are very important and valid, you would like to hold off further discussion until a break or the end of the session. At the end of the training, provide or suggest resources that deal with the topic if you can do so; if you cannot, exchange contact information and do your homework.

For more information on this topic, see **Soothing Tensions During a Training**.

Recommended Resources

Chambers, R. (2002). *Participatory workshops*. London, England: Earthscan.
Offers trainers easily accessible ideas, tips, and activities to make workshops more creative and fun.

Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics. (2010). *U.S. Resettlement: Domestic service provider toolkit*. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/co/domestic/toolkit/.
Features lesson plans and promising practices on cultural/community orientation topics.

Klatt, B. (1999). *The ultimate training workshop handbook: A comprehensive guide to leading successful workshops and training programs*. Washington, DC: McGraw-Hill.
Walks the trainer through the entire process of a training; an excellent resource for all trainers.

Lucas, R. W. (2005). *People strategies for trainers: 176 tips and techniques for dealing with difficult classroom situations*. Washington, DC: Amacom American Management Association.
Provides trainers with diverse and easy-to-read suggestions for dealing with challenging participants.

Silberman, M. (1995). *101 ways to make training active*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
Helps trainers make their content-related activities more fun and interactive.

Silberman, M. (1996). *Active learning: 101 strategies to teach any subject*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Provides creative ideas easily adaptable to cultural/community orientation activities.

West, E. (1997). *201 icebreakers: Group mixers, warm-ups, energizers, and playful activities*. Washington, DC: McGraw-Hill.
Includes many quick, ready-to-use activities to energize an orientation session.

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Adult Learning and Retention: Factors and Strategies

When working with adults, keep in mind that adults

- Are self-directed
- Are practical and problem solving
- Need to know why something is being learned
- Need adult-appropriate content
- Have previous experience as a resource
- Need to demonstrate background knowledge and abilities, and
- Need to be able to apply learning immediately to real-life situations

Many factors affect adult learning. These include the learner's

- Age
- Language background
- Level of prior education
- Degree of first language literacy
- Cultural background and related views regarding adult learning
- Individual learning preferences and styles
- Emotional and psychological issues
- Disabilities
- Motivation, and
- Personal situation and stressors

Research by the National Training Laboratory (World Bank, n.d.) shows that the amount of new information learners retain depends on how the information is presented. Here are retention rates for seven common ways of teaching new information:

- Lecture 5%
- Reading 10%
- Audio-Visual 20%
- Demonstration 30%
- Discussion 50%
- Practice by doing 75%
- Teaching others 90%

In other words, learners learn best when they are actively engaged in their own learning. As Confucius said nearly 2,500 years ago,

I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.
(Moncur,n.d.)

The theory of multiple intelligences was first proposed by Howard Gardner (1983), a Harvard psychologist. According to this theory, there are at least eight different types of intelligence that people possess to different degrees:

- Spatial intelligence (picture smart)
- Linguistic intelligence (word smart)
- Logical-mathematical intelligence (number/reasoning smart)
- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (body smart)
- Musical intelligence (music smart)
- Interpersonal intelligence (people smart)
- Intrapersonal intelligence (self smart)
- Naturalist intelligence (nature smart)

Because people have different kinds of intelligence, they learn in different ways, and teachers are most effective when they engage all of their students' learning styles (Carver, n.d.). (For more information on different intelligences, **visit here**.)

To capture participants' interests and to touch upon the different ways they learn, we recommend the following strategies for adult learners:

- **Activate background knowledge.** For example: Before discussing homes in the United States, have participants share with a partner what their homes in their countries of origin were like.
- **Use variety.** For example: Follow a brief lecture with a small-group discussion, then a role play.
- **Change the pace of the class as needed.** For example: Move from a short lecture to a longer small-group session.
- **Use active learning.** For example: Take participants on a field trip to the bank after they have learned about opening a bank account.
- **Touch upon all learning styles.** For example: Show a PowerPoint presentation with pictures, cue words, and sounds; have participants come up and describe what is on the slide; discuss.
- **Use an interpreter.** For example: While explaining a topic, use a trained interpreter to ensure that participants understand.
- **Encourage learner participation.** For example: Ask questions, use feedback, and encourage participants to learn from each other.
- **Review, review, review.** For example: Ask questions, check for understanding, and have participants explain what they have learned in their own words.
- **Use authentic (or authentic-looking) materials.** For example: Show samples of a check, a bill, a lease, and a paycheck when discussing budgeting and financial management.

References

Carver., A. (n.d.) MI—the theory. Retrieved from http://www.edwebproject.org/edref.mi.th.html

Gardner , H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences.* New York: Basic Books.

Moncur, L. (n.d.). *Quotation details.* (Quotation #25848). Retrieved from http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/25848.html

World Bank. (n.d.). *The learning pyramid.* Retrieved from the World Bank Web site siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVMARKETPLACE/Resources/Handout_The-LearningPyramid.pdf

Resources

Center for Applied Linguistics. (2006). *Cultural orientation for refugees: A handbook for U.S. trainers.* Washington, DC: Author.

Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics. (2010). COR Center Web site: http://www.cal.org/co/

Methods in Training

Using a variety of methods during an orientation or training helps get your messages across and holds participant interest. Varying the methodology can make a session more interactive, interesting, and fun.

The following chart lists some suggested methods and their uses. All of these instructional techniques have benefits. The choice of a method depends on the objectives of a particular session, the characteristics of the learners, and the time and resources available. For example, brief lectures and large group discussions are appropriate techniques to introduce a topic and impart knowledge; demonstrations, role plays, and field trips may be more useful for teaching skills; and case studies and simulations are well suited to exploring attitudes. Any given method can be used for multiple types of learning, and each type of learning can be achieved with more than one method. For example, group discussions and role plays can be used to observe and analyze attitides as well as to impart knowledge and teach skills.

Note that not all participants will be comfortable with all of these methods. Some learners may not be used to methods that require their active participation. Nevertheless, they are likely to learn and retain more if they are actively engaged than if they are just passively listening. Participants will already be in the process of adjusting to many differences in the United States; adapting to the U.S. style of education may be a challenge, but it will be beneficial to them in the long run. Be sure to introduce new styles of learning gradually, however. At the beginning, a brief introduction to the topic, followed by a small-group discussion, may be easier to handle than a game or a role play.

Method	Ideal for	Other Considerations
Brainstorming	• Bringing up new ideas on a specific topic • Imparting and sharing participants' knowledge • Exploring opinions and attitudes on a topic • Involving participants	• Brainstorming is similar to a group discussion, but allows for more ideas to be brought up. • Following a brainstorming session with a group discussion is often effective.
Case Studies	• Considering problems based on real-life situations • Identifying possible solutions • Teaching skills • Involving participants	• Case studies (or stories) are usually based on real-life experiences and present a situation for a group to analyze and solve. • Case studies are good for large- and small-group discussions. • Case studies are different from simulations in that situations are discussed rather than acted out.
Debates	• Exploring two differing attitudes or behaviors, often with no clear correct answer • Engaging participants	• The trainer should be aware that debates can become heated and competitive, and the trainer may be asked by participants to take a side.
Demonstrations	• Showing and telling • Teaching skills	• The trainer performs the task and participants observe. • Instead of just talking about a concept, the trainer demonstrates the information in action. • Effectiveness is limited if participants are not allowed to perform the task as well.
Discussions	• Imparting and sharing knowledge • Exploring opinions and attitudes on a topic • Involving participants	• Discussions have benefits similar to brainstorming, but fewer ideas are discussed. • Discussions are very effective when used after any session as a reflection. • Small-group discussion allows participants who are uncomfortable in a large-group setting to express themselves. • Small-group discussion prevents the trainer from dominating the conversation.

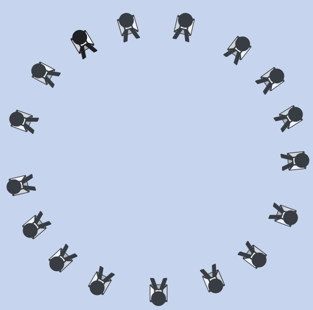
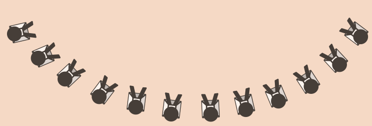
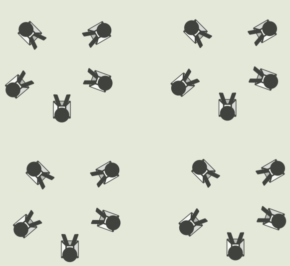
Method	Ideal for	Other Considerations
Field Trips	• Allowing hands-on experiences • Entering and learning about a new environment • Teaching skills • Engaging participants	• Field trips can be used in a wide variety of places and for different topics. • Field trips provide an opportunity to experience first-hand an actual environment or situation and enter it safely with guidance.
Games	• Practicing skills while having fun • Allowing real-life application of skills • Teaching skills • Engaging participants	• Games provide the opportunity for participants to enjoy learning. • General games can be adapted to use questions that refer to your topic. • Be sure that the games you use do not offend participants by seeming childish (e.g., by using graphics aimed at children).
Lectures	• Conveying a lot of information in a short period of time • Briefly introducing a topic • Presenting basic information • Imparting knowledge	• Some groups may initially be more receptive to lectures than to hands-on activities. • Lectures may not lead to actual learning, as participants are passive observers and do not have the opportunity to apply learning. • Lectures can be more effective when preceding or following another method. • Lectures are more interesting when combined with visuals, examples, and anecdotes, and when open-ended questions are encouraged.
Parking Lot	• Deferring irrelevant questions or those the trainer doesn't have time to address immediately • Demonstrating that the trainer will follow up on unanswered questions	• On the wall, hang flipchart labeled "Parking Lot." • When questions that can't be answered arise, write them on the flipchart. • If you don't know the answer, be honest; get back to the participants later with the information.
Reflection	• Debriefing sessions, whether simple or challenging • Checking for understanding (evaluation) • Ensuring all questions and concerns are covered • Engaging participants	• It is extremely important to allow time to debrief and reflect at the end of a topic. Leave adequate time after every session for at least a brief reflection period. • Use reflection questions, such as asking participants how they now feel about the topic and how their feelings may have changed. This will help you determine how to modify the program for future sessions.
Role Plays	• Dramatizing a problem or situation • Identifying possible solutions • Engaging participants prior to a discussion • Teaching skills	• Participants assume a role and act out a situation with their group while other participants observe. • Role plays are effective for helping participants practice skills or experience situations, and then discussing them. • It is extremely important to debrief and reflect after a role play.
Simulations	• Exploring attitudes • Learning and practicing skills • Discussing cultural adjustment and culture shock • Engaging participants • Identifying possible solutions • Considering problems based on real-life situations	• Simulations duplicate the real setting in which the skills are required. • Simulations are different from role plays because they require participants to completely immerse themselves in a situation and explore the feelings and attitudes they experience. • Groups can be encouraged to describe and analyze challenges.
Videos	• Providing visuals • Using with guided discussion	• Information can be conveyed in an interesting manner. • A useful technique is to pause the video and ask participants to discuss what they have seen, predict what might happen next, and relate the topic to real-life situations.

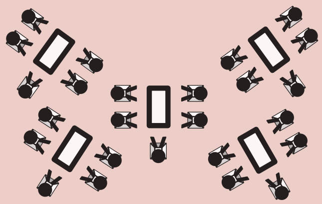
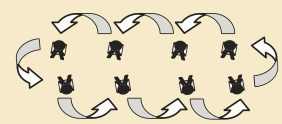
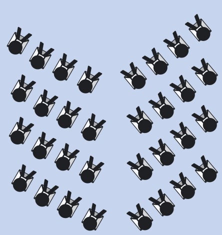
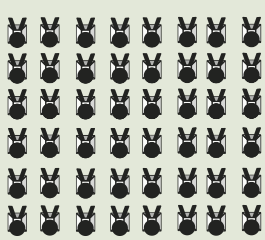
Setting Up a Training Room

The way a room is arranged influences the learning experience that occurs in the space. Setting up the room ahead of time is very important because it allows participants to find a seat and start feeling comfortable before the session begins. This also saves time.

There are a variety of ways to set up a room, and different set-ups are better for different environments and activities. For instance, small groups (or clusters) may be better equipped for group work than desks in rows (or classroom style). The use of desks, tables chairs and cushions is optional. Including desks or tables may help participants feel more comfortable and less exposed and is ideal when writing or drawing is involved. Not using desks and tables might be more appropriate or even necessary with cultural groups that are not accustomed to using them, when working with youth, or when facilitating games or role plays.

Making participants feel comfortable is very important to achieving a successful training or orientation session, so take time to plan ahead. Try different strategies to see what works best with your space, topic, and group.

Type of Arrangement	Ideal for	Other Considerations
Circle Style 	• Large group discussions	• Good for brainstorming and sharing ideas as equals or to create the feeling of equality among participants. • Can be used with or without tables. • Participants can sit around one large table or in a circle or square made up of smaller tables, leaving space in the center empty.
U-Shaped Style 	• Presentations • Watching videos • Large group discussion • Hearing from panelists or a speaker	• Can be used with or without desks or tables. • Allows participants to discuss with the presenter *and* other participants. • Can be shaped more like a semi-circle where the chairs on the edges make the circle more rounded so that participants can see one another better.
Cluster Style 	• Small-group work • Small-group discussions • Discussing problems, issues, critical incidents, case studies	• Can be used with or without chairs, desks, or tables. • Can be set up in circles, squares, ovals, rectangles, and so forth.

Type of Arrangement	Ideal for	Other Considerations
Herringbone Style 	• Small-group work *and* large-group discussions together • Informational presentations	• Participants can see the presenter and any visuals at the front of the room, yet can still work in small groups. • The group can move back and forth between large-group discussions and small-group work without having to rearrange furniture. • Works best with small tables for each group, as work can be done there.
Partner Style 	• Pair or partner work • Games • Introductions	• Remember to plan for groups of threes if there is an odd number of participants or if participants feel more comfortable in groups of threes. • Can be used in a “carousel” manner, with participants moving to different chairs to talk with others: 
V-Shaped Style 	• Medium-size group presentations	• Can be used with or without desks or tables. • Similar to classroom style, but does not allow for as many seats; however, angling the seats provides participants a better view of one another. • Enhances the opportunity for small-group discussion more than the Classroom Style described below.
Classroom Style 	• Watching videos • Presentations and briefings • Lecture	• Can be used with or without desks or tables (theatre style). • Fits many people into the room. • Good when group discussion is not as important. • Does not allow space for movement. • Can be used for question-and-answer with speakers. • An aisle or two can be created between seats for some mobility.

Classroom Arrangements Checklist:

- [ ] Reserve a space appropriate for the number of attendees.
- [ ] Accommodate for those with disabilities such as hearing, seeing, or mobility issues.
- [ ] Arrange for necessary technological items (acoustics, laptops, projectors, screens, speakers, microphones, etc.) and support.
- [ ] Find out whom to contact if there are technical (or other) problems.
- [ ] Determine which wall will be the "front" of the room, with the entrance at the rear to minimize distractions when people enter and exit.
- [ ] Select a seating arrangement that supports the goals of the session and the presenter.
- [ ] Build in time for room set-up changes.
- [ ] Use comfortable chairs (and adjustable chairs for longer sessions).
- [ ] Create aisles and easy access to seating, so that participants do not feel cramped. Keep in mind that various cultures have different views regarding the distance appropriate between people.
- [ ] Provide surface for writing, laptops, and beverages if needed.
- [ ] Have a space reserved for refreshments if necessary.
- [ ] Find space for the trainer's personal items that is out of the way and not distracting.
- [ ] Make sure all technology works ahead of time.
- [ ] Locate visual equipment (screens, flipcharts, etc.) so that participants can see the materials.
- [ ] Check for and maintain adequate air, temperature control, and lighting.
- [ ] Avoid challenging odors, enticing aromas, and exterior noise.
- [ ] Place "Welcome" signs on outside doors indicating the event and the time.
- [ ] Tape door latches to prevent them from making noise when people have to arrive late or leave early.
- [ ] Discuss housekeeping items, such as the location of restrooms, coatrooms, and exits, near the beginning of the session.

Reference

- Adapted with permission from Wallace, M. (2002). *Guide on the side—room setups for presentations & training—one size does NOT fit all.* Retrieved from http://www.llrx.com/columns/guide59.htm.

Soothing Tensions

Several factors can cause tension in an orientation session. These include

- disagreements among group members or with the trainer,
- clashing personality types,
- cultural conflict,
- immature participants, and
- age differences.

How effectively the trainer deals with the tension depends, in turn, on several different factors, including the time available to address issues that arise and group support for the trainer. But the most important factor is the trainer's own skill in preventing and defusing tension and conflict.

How do experienced trainers deal with tension and conflict? Human conflict is complex, and there is rarely one sure-fire way to deal with a difficult individual, or a "type" of individual. That being said, there are many different strategies that trainers use that have proven to be effective in dealing with disruptive participants (see Resources, below, for documents that discuss many of these strategies).

First, there are some things that a trainer can do preventively, before and during a session, to lessen the likelihood of disruptive behavior.

Before the session:

- *Be prepared.* Ensure the room is set up ahead of time; have all handouts ready to go and all activities prepared.
- *Prepare for active learning.* Studies show that participants learn more when they are actively engaged in their learning (Lucas, 2005, p. 10; Mestre, 2000, p. 2; Tewksbury & Macdonald, 2005). And engaged learners are more likely to contribute productively to the session.

At the beginning of the session:

- *Set rules.* Create a set of rules, preferably (time-permitting) with the input of participants. Participants are more likely to follow rules that they themselves have helped create. As the trainer, you can make sure that the rules include those that are important to you (e.g., "Don't talk out of turn" or "Keep cell phones on silent") by asking questions with a "we" ("Should *we* include anything about interruptions?" or "How do *we* feel about cell phones?"). Once the rules have been created, post them on the wall for all to see.
- *Make a training contract.* A training contract typically outlines the roles of the trainer and the participant and is signed by both individuals. A contract is generally only done for longer trainings—those that last two or more days.

Throughout the session:

- *Treat participants as adults.* Adults come into a session with background experience and often with goals. Acknowledge their experience and goals, and draw on participant talents and levels of expertise when possible. (For more information on this topic, see the COR Center's document on adult learning and retention.)
- *Project a positive image.* Think and act positively toward participants from the first time you meet them by smiling, appearing approachable, and being open-minded.
- *Use words and phrases that build positive relationships.* Phrases such as *please, thank you, I'm sorry, I was wrong, I understand, concern* (instead of *problem*), *often* (instead of *always*), and *some* (instead of *everyone*) help to create a positive atmosphere.
- *Use appropriate and culturally sensitive terminology.* To the best of your abilities, use terms appropriately and correctly. For instance, refugees from Burma are often called Burmese, but keep in mind that there are many ethnic groups of refugees from Burma (Burman, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Shan, to name a few) and many different languages spoken. To learn about the languages and cultures of specific refugee groups, see the COR Center Web site.
- *Maintain good time management.* Start on time, and stick to your schedule. Stay on track in between sessions. When the morning break is over, have participants in their positions (whether it is in seats, on the floor, or standing) and begin. This helps your sessions end on time.
- *Listen openly.* As participants offer ideas, questions, suggestions or feedback, take the time to listen and think about their comments, responding appropriately and respectfully. This will also encourage participants to do the same to you and the other participants.
- *Provide ongoing feedback.* This allows participants to know the session rules and expectations so they can succeed and maximize their learning potential.

Of course, these suggestions do not always prevent undesirable participant behavior. Here are some strategies to deal with participants who are inattentive, uncooperative, or disruptive.

When you sense you are losing the attention of participants, help them listen better.

- Slow down your speech if participants are having a hard time understanding what you are saying.
- Vary your speaking style and chunk information together.
- Elicit questions and feedback.
- Control side conversations by asking that just one person speak at a time.
- Review information frequently.
- Attract participants' attention by using their names.

Quiet the conversationalists.

- When participants continuously engage in a side conversation, first use nonverbal communication (e.g., closing the distance between you and the talkers, raising your voice, making eye contact) to discourage the conversation.
- Call on one of the talkers by name and ask a specific question or for a synopsis of what was recently discussed.
- If the talkers continue, move them to different parts of the room. If *that* doesn't work, take the talkers aside and discuss the issue. Ideally, this discussion would be during a planned break, but create one if necessary.

Limit dominating participants.

- If a participant is dominating the conversation, consider setting time limits for comments (30 seconds, a minute) or diplomatically breaking in ("You raise an interesting issue. Let me stop you and get input from some others.").
- Remain polite, summarize what the participant has said, accept that the point is valid and important, but then state, "We need to keep the group on task, so can we further discuss this during a break?"
- Use a yes-or-no question with the talker ("Do you experience this a lot?") and then ask others for suggestions on the topic.
- When working with a co-facilitator, one of you can work with the group at large while the other takes the disruptive participant aside to discuss the situation.

Allow other participants to resolve issues.

- Be aware of the interactions between the difficult participant and the others in the group. Do others appear to support the participant? More often than not, other participants are also frustrated by the difficult participant and will take actions to quiet him or her.
- Use small-group activities with "randomly" selected leaders to quiet the louder participants.
- Pair a problematic participant with someone who can help him or her behave more appropriately.

Defuse an agitator.

- If a participant is bothering the group by loudly exhibiting his or her knowledge, ask others for their opinions on the subject.
- Break the group into pair work. Pair yourself with the difficult participant to exchange points of view, while keeping the rest of the group productive.
- If the situation becomes intolerable, split into small-group discussions or announce a break. Take the individual aside. Calmly describe the challenges you are facing as a result of his or her behavior and ask the person to leave.

Do not allow negativity to derail discussion.

- With participants who are particularly negative or resistant to ideas, listen to their rationale and try to understand their point of view.
- After a participant has been especially critical or negative, ask others in the group to give their viewpoints.
- Maintain an optimistic perspective.

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