

# Facilitation Skills



## OBJECTIVES

**At the end of this unit, participants will be able to:**

- Understand basic facilitation skills: push, pull, and balance
- Practice facilitation skills



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before the session begins, select and print icebreakers and energizers from the PETS toolkit prior to the training session. Select two or three easy activities that can be accomplished in a short period of time. Review the handout on “Balancing Skills” to be familiar with the facilitation skills.
2. Welcome participants, introduce the topic, and share objectives.
3. Conduct the activity “Three Basic Facilitation Skills” (15 minutes)
  - Explain that CHWs may have roles that include group facilitation in educational, support, or social groups. There are 3 basic facilitation skills that serve as a starting point for effective group facilitation.
  - Distribute the Balancing Skills handout.
  - Describe each skill: Push, pull, and balance. Write the skills on flip chart sheets to create a visual aide (optional).
  - Push skills occur when information flows from the facilitator to participants. Push skills involve transmitting (giving) information. Participants can imagine an arrow pointing away from the facilitator to remember the directional flow of information.
    - Examples: welcome, facilitator introduction to the group, giving instructions.
    - Ask participants to give another example of a push skill.
  - Pull skills occur when the facilitator requests information from the participants. Pull skills often involve the use of open-ended questions to receive information and invite participation. Participants can imagine an arrow pointing to the facilitator to remember the directional flow of information.

(continued)



## Related C3 Roles

Building individual and community capacity

## Related C3 Skills

Communication skills, education and facilitation skills



## Method(s) of Instruction

Small group



## Estimated time

60 minutes



## Key Concepts

Facilitation skills, leading groups, support group skills, group facilitation skills



## Materials

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Practice assignments (Icebreakers from PETS toolkit <https://ciswh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/HIV-peer-training-activities.pdf>)

## Handouts

- Balancing Skills



## Resources

Icebreakers and Energizers from PETS toolkit <https://ciswh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/HIV-peer-training-activities.pdf>

## Facilitation Skills



### INSTRUCTIONS (continued)

- Examples: eliciting information from participants using open questions, inviting group members to participate in an ice breaker, polling the group.
  - Ask participants to give an example of a pull skill.
  - Balancing skills are a collection of skills used to create and maintain a safe and supportive group atmosphere. This collection of skills helps the group function well. In addition to the examples below, draw participants' attention to the handout "Balancing Skills" for more information.
  - Examples: creating safety within the group via group agreements, trust building activities, managing silence, sharing power.
  - Ask participants to provide examples of push, pull and balancing skills they have noticed during this training session. Affirm their responses and provide examples that have not been shared.
4. Conduct the practice activity **(35 minutes. Note: The time allotted is not sufficient for every participant to facilitate. Adjust according to your needs.)**
- Introduce the activity. Tell participants they will have an opportunity to practice push, pull, and balancing skills by facilitating an icebreaker or energizer.
  - Divide participants into small groups of 4–5 participants.
  - Tell participants to select a volunteer from their group who will lead an activity. The remaining members of the group will role-play session participants.
  - Once the volunteer facilitators are identified, distribute an icebreaker or energizer to each. Allow 3–5 minutes for them to read the instructions and prepare to facilitate.
  - Inform volunteer facilitators that they will not have time to facilitate each step of the activity. They are to focus on using their facilitation skills, push, pull, and balance. Executing the activity perfectly is not the goal.
- Inform remaining group participants to stay in role, but simultaneously observe the facilitator's use of push, pull, and balance skills to provide feedback at the end of the activity.
  - Allow 7 minutes each for group to practice push, pull, and balancing skills during their facilitations.
  - At the end of the first practice session, allow participants (within their small groups) 1–2 minutes to share with each other the facilitation skills they observed.
  - Next, repeat the steps with a new facilitator and new activity. (Note: Time allotted allows for 2 practice sessions.)
5. Debrief and close (10 minutes)
- Reconvene the large group.
  - Ask participants for examples of when they saw the facilitators using push, pull, and balancing skills. Ask them to note instances when the facilitator did well and areas that would strengthen their ability.
  - Invite practice facilitators to share feedback on their facilitation by responding to these questions.
    - What did you do well during your facilitation practice?
    - What do you think would strengthen your facilitation skills?
  - Points to remember:
  - Too much push can stifle participation. Too much pull can lead to disorder and lack of direction. Balancing skills are effective in establishing an effective atmosphere for learning and sharing.
6. Wrap up
- Summarize and close.
  - Ask participants if there are any questions.
  - Ask, "What is one new thing you learned to use in your work as a Community Health Worker?"
  - Take responses from 2–3 participants.
  - Thank participants for their contributions.

# Balancing Skills

**Giving and receiving feedback** is a balancing act. Effective facilitators correct misinformation and give an affirming response to a participant at the same time. They know how to give feedback, how to receive it, and how to apply it.

**Maintaining a nonjudgmental perspective** is another balancing act. In order to learn, people need to feel safe and willing to participate in the session. Part of this safety is in knowing that their values and beliefs will be respected. By remaining nonjudgmental, effective facilitators balance many skills at once. They apply skills they have learned, such as avoiding labels, and instead use language that describes behavior. They also give affirming feedback to all participants even when their own values differ from those of the participants.

**Setting the climate** allows effective learning to take place. Although we often think of climate setting as the opening of a training session (for example, the icebreaker), the opening is only part of the overall process. Climate setting continues throughout the session in different ways: by providing affirming feedback to participants, by bouncing back questions and comments to stimulate greater participation, by removing distractions in the physical environment such as noise, interruptions, uncomfortable chairs, and maintaining a comfortable room temperature, and by having all necessary audio-visual equipment ready and working.

**Keeping on topic** can also be a balancing act because the facilitator is often trying to cover content using push and pull skills and thus meet participant needs by responding to their comments or questions. When a question or comment takes the group off topic, the facilitator must decide whether the detour creates a learning opportunity (a teachable moment), or whether he/she needs to bring the group back on track. This may mean that they will put some questions aside for discussion later. A parking lot is a good way of keeping track of questions that have been put aside for later. These are publicly posted sheets of paper on which questions are written to be addressed later.

**Managing time** is finding a balance between meeting group needs, taking advantage of teachable moments, and staying on schedule. Managing time includes getting agreement from the group on starting, ending, and break times, being responsible for starting and ending sessions on time, making sure that all important agenda items fit into the schedule, and reaching agreements with participants regarding time and content issues.

Reference:

Building Blocks to Peer Success, April 2009: Facilitation Skills

<https://ciswh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/HIV-peer-training-toolkit-guide.pdf>

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