

# THINKING FOR A CHANGE

## GROUP PARTICIPATION RULES

### Facilitator Reference Guide

1. **Be on time.** The sessions are presented within a two-hour time frame. Tardiness disrupts the class and creates a sense of disrespect for the time of participants and the facilitator. Repeated tardiness will result in additional assignment and could progress to dismissal from the group.

***Note:** as a facilitator it is important that you set a positive model of consistency for the participants. The a reasonable timeframe for tardiness is no more than 15 minutes as this is typically the time when homework review is happening and no new content is presented. The best way to handle these situations is to make this rule clear from the beginning of the cycle and hold firm to it throughout the sessions. When exceptions are made, you must justify them to the group as well as document each instance of exception. Repeated tardiness should be responded to immediately and repeated failure should result in discharge from the group. You must document any instances of this rule violation to support your potential decision of discharge.*

2. **Be respectful of others.** Ideas, beliefs and comments presented during sessions are to be respected. Mocking, insulting or disrespect will not be tolerated. Opinions will be respected and appreciated. Failure to comply with this rule will result in progressive sanctions up to dismissal from the group.

***Note:** As a facilitator, you are responsible for the environment of the group. Participants need to feel safe and comfortable to share their unedited thoughts and feelings within the group. It often helps to have a discussion and define what this means so that a norm is established for this rule. You must be a model of this by treating their reports as pure information with no physical, emotional or verbal response to what is said. We do not judge nor do we allow the other participants to make comments or judge presented information. An appropriate response to disrespectful behavior is to redirect the action by reminding them of the group norms. If the behavior persists, one of the facilitators should pull the offender out of the session and give a direct verbal warning to cease the behavior while explaining the need for respect. Document any warnings given as they may result in discharge from the group.*

3. **All group members will participate in each lesson.** This program involves a significant amount of doing and saying. Your participation shows your understanding of the material and is expected during each session.

**Note:** As a facilitator you are required to ensure this rule is upheld. The participants must actively involve themselves in each class as this increases their retention and allows you to coach and provide feedback to them to increase their success in transfer of the skill taught. Participation is defined at a minimal as answering questions when posed and all must complete the role play detailed in each session. No participant should be allowed to “skip” a role play. Strategies for gaining involvement are:

- Normalize participation through encouraging input, using open questions and giving affirmations to those who are involved in the discussion
- Calling on the passive client first to role play.
- Discussing lack of participation with the participant in question at the end of the session and restating group norm.
- Doing a start up activity such as asking for mood check on a scale of 1-10 (being high) or having participants select a feeling to describe their mood.

Failure to participate should be responded to immediately and repeated failure should result in discharge from the group. You must document any instances of this rule violation to support your potential decision of discharge.

4. **Assignments must be completed as directed.** Homework will be assigned after every class. You are expected to bring your completed assignment to the next scheduled session. Failure to comply will result in additional assignment and could progress to dismissal from the group.

**Note:** Homework is a key element of the program and plays a strong role in maintaining integrity of the group. Homework is the transfer aspect of skill building where the true learning takes place. The participant must try the new skill in his real environment in order to experience those reinforcers necessary for eventual adoption of the new skill. As a facilitator, you must be vigilante in assigning and reviewing homework. Failure to complete homework should not be allowed in any case. This being said, you must be mindful of participants who struggle with reading and writing. For these participants you have to make special arrangements to help them be successful such as having them come to group early or even having the supervising agent set an appointment to assist the participant in completing the assignment. Failure to complete homework should be responded to immediately and repeated failure should result in discharge from the group. You must document any instances of this rule violation to support your potential decision of discharge.

5. **Absences are not tolerated.** Each session builds on the previous one. Repeated absence will hinder the progression of learning for a participant. Any unexcused absence will result in progressive sanction up to dismissal from the group.

**Note:** Attendance is a vital element in learning the skills of the program. If the participant is not in group then they cannot learn. As a rule, two unexcused absences are the maximum that should be allowed for a cycle of class. That being said, you

*have the discretion of determining what is considered excessive within a range of 2-5 absences. The absent participant should make arrangements to completed any missed assignments and be briefed on the skill missed as well as role play it with the facilitator before he is allowed to return to class. You should establish your group norm of this expectation from the first session by making this clear and getting a understanding from all participants of your response to absences. Examples of reasonable excused absences include but are not limited to:*

- *Transportation issues only when the participant calls to notify the facilitator and supervising agent of the issue. Repeated use of this excuse must be accompanied by documentation.*
- *Medical issues only when the participant calls to notify the facilitator and supervising agent of the issue. Repeated use of this excuse must be accompanied by documentation.*
- *Childcare issues only when the participant calls to notify the facilitator and supervising agent of the issue. Repeated use of this excuse must be accompanied by documentation.*
- *Serious family issues only when the participant calls to notify the facilitator and supervising agent of the issue. Repeated use of this excuse must be accompanied by documentation.*
- *Legal issues only when the participant calls to notify the facilitator and supervising agent of the issue. Repeated use of this excuse must be accompanied by documentation.*

*All absences must be documented and should be responded to with a direct verbal warning. Any absence should be responded to immediately and repeated failure should result in discharge from the group. You must document any instances of this rule violation to support your potential decision of discharge.*

6. **Confidentiality is expected of all participants.** The topics and opinions expressed with in a session are intended to help participants explore links between their thoughts and their behavior. Participants are expected to refrain from discussing other participant's personal information revealed within a session. Those found to have violated this rule would receive additional assignments and progressive sanction for repeated incidents.

**Note:** *This is an extension of the respectful rule. Personal information shared within these sessions should not be discussed outside of groups by the participants. At the same time, you must be transparent in being a mandatory reporter. Make it clear that any admission of a chargeable offense will be reported to the supervising agent as well as authorities when necessary. That being said, it is imperative that you establish this group norm in a manner that promotes honesty in their self reflection. This can be done by explaining that thoughts and feelings are not punishable, it is the actions they may lead to that have the potential of consequences. You have a responsibility to report any reported significant behavior that would be considered a chargeable offense.*

7. **Make it fun!** This is a program designed to offer tools for effecting behavioral change. The issues and topics discussed will be serious at times but remember this is your group. You will get out what you put in.

***Note:** This group norm is established to allow the participants to engage in the process. The activities conducted during the session should be presented in a dynamic, interesting and respectful manner.*

## Tips for Facilitators

### Effective Modeling for Trainers

- ❑ Display should depict all behavioral steps of the skill
- ❑ All steps should be modeled in their correct sequence
- ❑ Facilitators should rehearse vignettes prior to the session
- ❑ Select situations relevant to the participants' real life circumstances
- ❑ Co-actor portrayed as a person reasonably similar in age
- ❑ Modeling displays depict one skill at a time
- ❑ Distribute skill cards to class participants
- ❑ Inform class participants that main actors for certain skills "think aloud"

## Social Skills (Lessons 2-5 & 11-15)

1. Homework Review
2. Define the Skill (let participants read each step in the skill and ask why they think it's important.)
3. Model the skill
4. Discuss the participants' current need for the skill – Why do s/he think this an important skill, discuss a time in the next several days (before the next class), s/he can use the skill.
5. Select Role Player (main actor)
6. Set up role play (main actor, co-actor, and set the stage)
7. Conduct the role play
8. Provide feedback on how well the behavioral steps were followed (order of feedback: co-actor, students/observing participants, facilitators and then main actor)
  - Feedback should consist of positive reinforcement!!
9. Select the next role play (each participant must be the main actor)
10. Assign Homework

## Role Playing

- ❑ Invite comments on the behavioral steps and how they might be useful in real-life situations
- ❑ Focus on current and future skill use (not past situations)
- ❑ Co-actor is selected after main actor describes the situation in which the skill may be useful
- ❑ Solicit additional information from main actor to set the stage (location, environment, etc)
- ❑ Review the steps of the skill with the main actor
- ❑ Tell the main actor to refer to the skill card (make sure main actor as skill card in hand when role playing)
- ❑ Assign other group members to watch the role play and assign class participants to watch for a specific step in the skill
- ❑ Ensure actors stay in role
- ❑ Facilitator coaches on the cues to watch
- ❑ Other techniques include role reversal (co-actor becomes main actor)

## **Performance** Feedback

- ❑ Provide class participants information visually (overheads/handouts; verbally (read materials) and written (have them read)
- ❑ Promote over-learning
- ❑ Enforce identical elements
- ❑ Maximize stimulus variability
- ❑ Foster real-life reinforcement