
Fifteen ways to get people talking

1. Start with non-threatening questions.
2. Begin with questions that ask for opinions.
3. Instead of starting with a question, begin with a role-play, case study, or tension getter that provokes a response.
4. Give your opinion about the question and ask the group to respond to it.
5. Ask the group to anonymously write down their responses to a question or topic. Collect their papers to read aloud then let the group respond to what they wrote.
6. If the group is large, divide into smaller groups that discuss the issue then report their conclusions to the larger group.
7. If the group combines 12-year-olds with 16-year-olds, for example, divide into groups of similar ages.
8. Ask the kids why they are not talking discuss their responses to that question.
9. Make the dialogue seem more like a game with discussion starters like Talk Sheets, Talk Boxes, or Role-A-Role.
10. Play Round-Robin with discussion leaders-students take turns asking the questions that keep discussion moving, as well as responding to other members comments.
11. Brainstorm all the possible responses to the question.
12. Ask all adults to leave the room while the kids discuss the questions on their own. When the time limit is up, the adults return to hear the kids' report on what they discussed.
13. Give the kids a survey; discuss the results.
14. End the meeting formally, then informally bring up some of the issues of the discussion.
15. Forget the discussion this time and try it some other time.