

# 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.

## Stages of Group Life

Groups, like all living organisms, move through stages of development. This chart will help you prepare for each stage. Often leaders take the blame for changes in group dynamics that are, in reality, simply the result of a shift in development of the group cycle. Use this chart to take a "snapshot" of your group, and to plan a strategy for moving productively through each stage. (This chart is adapted from the Small Group Leader's Handbook by InterVarsity).

### Helping Group Members Process Growing Pains

Stage	Formation	Exploration	Transition	Action	Birthing	Termination
# Meetings Per Stage	4-6	6-10	4-8	12-24	4-8	2-6
Member's Questions	Who is in the group? Do I like my group?	Do I fit here? How is our group doing?	Are we really open with each other? Will this group accomplish its mission?	How will we do this? What can we accomplish together? Will we take the risk?	Will we survive? How will we change?	Did we grow? What did we learn? Will I join another group?
Member's Feelings	Excitement Anticipation Awkwardness	Comfortable Relaxed Open	Tense Anxious Impatient Doubtful	Eager Open Vulnerable Supportive	Grief Enthusiasm Loss Anticipation Fear	Respectful Reflective Thankful Sad
Member's Role	Gather information about others	Give information Accept others	Provide feedback Express frustration	Express feelings Use my gifts Take ownership Accept challenges	Express concerns Accept reality Discuss changes Give blessing	Show love Express thanks Affirm relationships
Leader's Response	Caring Clear Accepting	Affirmation Feedback Warmth Modeling	Confront Encourage Challenge	Challenge Affirm Guide Release	Listen actively Acknowledge feelings Affirm members	Review Reflect Respond
Leader's Role	Communicate vision Promote sharing Define goals	Generate trust Discuss values Facilitate relationships Create covenant	Provide self-disclosure Re-examine covenant Be flexible	Provide service opportunities Clarify goals Begin seeking 2nd apprentice Celebrate results	Cast vision Pray for birth Create sub-groups Communicate with apprentice	Celebrate Give Gifts Communion Bring closure
Content of Communication	Events Topics Facts	Topics People Group God's nature	Personal thoughts Feelings Values God's plan	Group relationships Tasks God's work	People Leadership Vision God's desires	Relationships People God's blessings
Style of Communication	Responsive General Brief	Descriptive Social Explanatory	Assertive Argumentative Directive One-way	Speculative Cooperative Interactive Two-way Confrontive	Interactive Confrontive Expressive	Reflective Understanding Affirming