

Leading a Group Discussion

Good discussions give each person the chance to **think** about a question and **decide** how he or she feels about the topic. A discussion leader keeps the discussion going like a volleyball player keeps the ball in the air. Some things to try:

- **Invite participation.** Give each person a chance to speak. Develop some fun ways to get each person contributing to the subject and to redirect persons who are sharing too much. Always respect a participant who chooses to pass on a particular question.
- **Focus the discussion** to deal with something that matters to the group. Relate the topic to a common experience or interest.
- **Be comfortable with silence.** Give participants a chance to think and reflect on the topic and the question.
- **Be ready to make the topic more real** by rephrasing the question or relating the topic to a common experience.
- **Share your own experience.** Sometimes you can share as a way to get things started or as a way to finish up a topic. Be brief: as the leader you need to be careful not to dominate the conversation.
- **Summarize the discussion.** As a way of closing the topic or checking for new ideas, you can summarize the opinions you have heard so far. Be prepared when needed to provide a brief report for a larger group.