



getting
what
you
want!



*A Peer Guide to
Facilitating Workshops*



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YOUNG MOTHERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN
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a peer guide to facilitating workshops

This guide to facilitating workshops has been prepared by the young women of Young Mothers for Young Women. It has been designed to be used by young women when preparing to run peer workshops.

About YMYW

Young Mothers for Young Women grew from a participative action research project in 1994 called 'Stop I'm always waiting for something to happen.' One of the recommendations from this project was to form a network of young women to provide peer support, education and advocacy. This network is run by young women, for young women. As a part of this, we regularly hold training workshops and support groups.

We recognise that peer support and advocacy is important in assisting young women in maintaining safe, healthy relationships and lifestyles.

We hope that you find the following information useful.

Peer education:

- Respects participants as individuals
- Flourishes in a climate of trust and openness
- Sees the presenter as both facilitator and learner as are the participants
- Sees the presenter as part of the group and not over the group



- Encourages interchange, not only between presenter and group but also among the participants themselves
- Is supportive and fosters self esteem
- Respects the experience of the participants
- Appeals to both thinking and feeling ways of knowing
- Values partnerships between young women and professional workers

Peer education is directed by the peer workers who, with the support of professional workers, have a set format and plan about the information that needs to be covered in the group session. In the education programs and workshops developed by Young Mothers for Young Women, interaction with the participants is a goal. The peer workers hope to provide a supportive atmosphere to encourage participants to explore the content more fully.

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An important aspect in gaining trust is to respect confidences and privacy. Engaging with young women who are parents involves communicating about sensitive issues which may be impacting on their life. Issues such as domestic violence and child protection may be part of discussions. If you feel that something told to you in confidence should go further, discuss this with the young woman who took you into her confidence and don't take it further without her permission. However if a disclosure is such that you are concerned about the safety of a young woman, a child or another person, it is critical that you discuss your concerns with a professional. Whatever action may be necessary, the young woman must always be informed. In some cases this places a burden of knowledge on you and you will need to very clear ahead of time about whether you are prepared to take or not to take action. It is most important that participants understand your role and responsibility in this regard and that you make it clear to them.

Peer education is based on the belief that young women are often more receptive to

and influenced by their peers and aims to enhance the information provided. Peer education is not only an approach to education and informing values and beliefs but also to encouraging and developing skills such as self-direction, decision making, communication, leadership and teamwork.

The young people who participate in the workshops may come from a range of religious, cultural and political backgrounds. It is important to respect these differences and foster tolerance and acceptance in the group. It is not necessary to have common beliefs and traditions to work towards a common goal.

Young Mothers for Young Women recommends having more than one peer educator present the workshop for the following reasons:

- It models a cooperative relationship
- One peer worker can feel isolated and alone
- Using only one peer educator can give the impression that the facilitator is an expert, knowing all the answers
- Peer educators have their own skills, talents and style of presentation
- Creates a more interesting dynamic
- Allows for one to be watching the group and responding to the participants if they are struggling with their feelings about the content



preparing for the workshop

Initial Contact

In your initial contact you should state what you prefer for the workshop.

E.g.

- Size of group
- Male/female or female only
- Location of workshop – preferable in a space that allows arrangement of participants and peer educators in a circle
- Time required (when and duration)

It will also help to learn as much as you can about the group before planning the workshop, including whether attendance at the workshop is voluntary or compulsory.


The peer-learning model of presentation does not assume that the presenter knows what the group needs. Ideally the presenter would meet with representatives of the group some time before the workshop was

due. The aims of such a meeting would be:

- To listen to what the group thinks and knows it needs
- To help the group 'own' the workshop
- To establish initial trust with part of the group
- To 'ripple out' discussion of the issues among the participants even before the workshop begins
- To check out what processes the group would be comfortable with
- To share what presenters can offer to the participants.

While such a meeting is demanding on the presenter it will reap huge rewards during the workshop itself. For the most part, the initial groups will probably come up with needs similar to those addressed in this workshop. This is not the point. By meeting

with some of the participants beforehand the presenter is saying:

- This is your workshop
 - Your experiences are important to me
 - I trust your judgement as to what you need
 - We are all learning together
 - I respect you as a person
 - We have knowledge and information to share with you
- 

Transport/Childcare/Catering

Young women who are parents experience many barriers to participating in education and training, and any workshop respecting the reality of these young women's lives needs to attempt to break down these barriers. Therefore the provision of transport, childcare and food needs to be considered in the planning of workshops.

Creating a Climate for the Workshop

Peer education flourishes in a climate of trust, respect and acceptance. These do not just happen. A peer presenter will put strategies in place to try to achieve this climate while the participants are gathering.

Pre Session:

- Arriving in plenty of time for the workshop so that everything is prepared and ready to go before the participants start arriving
- Greeting participants as they arrive and introducing yourself
- Participants may choose to make tea/coffee/cold drink before the session begins
- Handing the materials personally to each participant rather than just leaving it on the seats
- If appropriate, inviting participants to write their names on name tags. (In some situations the use of name tags frees participants to talk more easily to each other)
- Having appropriate music playing as participants arrive
- Informing and reassuring participants of child care arrangements and procedures



Breaks

It is important that regular breaks are included when planning each session. These breaks need to be spaced fairly evenly apart and participants need to know in advance when the next break will be.

A short break of about 10 minutes for morning or afternoon tea gives enough time to grab a quick drink, stretch or trip to the toilet. It also gives participants an opportunity to check on their children, which is important particularly if this is their first contact with childcare.

Do not consider cutting out a break if a session is running behind schedule, rather look at shortening breaks and sessions. These breaks are essential for people to remain active and energetic participants throughout the entire session.

Be respectful about how young women interact with their children's needs and problem solve issues rather than provide rigid rules.



Starting the Workshop



Welcome

Create a welcoming atmosphere by:

- Introducing yourself and your co-presenter
- Giving information about the location of toilets, tea and coffee facilities, water, any designated area's (smoking, childcare), and mobile phones
- Pointing out to participants that they have the responsibility of looking after themselves during the workshop and that they are free to leave at any time
- Respecting personal differences and affirming that difference is OK
- Indicating that you will respect confidences shared during the workshop and that you expect the participants to do likewise

Forming the group

The use of icebreakers/warm up exercises is essential. Not only do they help the group to get to know one another better, but they also help to lift the energy of the group.

~ Ask the group to go around and name something that they had to give up to be able to come that day

This warm up exercise recognises what each participant and facilitator had given up to attend that day. This is a good exercise to begin the program with, as it creates an environment that acknowledges the difficulties young women who are parenting must overcome in order to attend.

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- ~ Simply pass a roll of toilet paper around the group asking participants to tear off as many sheets as they like, after the group is finished announce that for each sheet they have ripped off they now have to share something about themselves that no one in the group knows.

This can be a lot of fun for a group that knows each other well, but also for a group that is just learning about each other. Remember to remind participants only to share what they are comfortable with (stories of childhood achievements or accidents are always good.)

- ~ Go around the room once asking participants to finish a statement. Make the statements lighthearted and easily answerable. For example:

“My ideal holiday is”

“My most embarrassing moment that I’m willing to admit to is.....”

There are many different versions of this exercise and it can be made as fun or as serious as you want.

- ~ All participants are asked to line up in a given order (eg order of their birthdays, alphabetical order of their first/last names). Participants are not allowed to talk but must do this by using hand signals or other non-verbal communication

- All of the exercises should be done in the group, but participants need to have the option to pass if they want to
- The facilitators should always go first, as this models how other participants should respond



Other Info

The Role of Supervisors And Trainers

Peer workers require a network of professional and personal support. A supervisor is part of their professional network. The main role of the supervisor is to support the group of peer workers and recognise and utilise the skills of each different peer worker involved.

A supervisor can assist peer workers in the following ways:

- by encouraging them to meet the goal of the program
- by helping them to make informed choices
- by teaching them skills
- by fostering a team spirit
- by creating a positive environment
- by advocating for their rights
- by believing in their capabilities
- by creating structure and systems that will assist the projects delivery, documentation and evaluation
- by providing useful material
- by helping to network with similar projects

- by facilitating problems solving or conflict resolution
- by listening and learning from the peers
- by respecting diversity
- by treating people justly
- by giving feedback

Facilitating Discussion

- The *Getting What You Want* series is designed in a way that allows for a lot of discussion between participants. Facilitating discussion is difficult and requires good preparation and lots of practice. The role of the peer educator in facilitating discussion is to help group members teach themselves. The aim is not to show or share what they know, but to help them share what they know with each other. To do this you must make it clear that learning in this group is a shared responsibility
- Have a professional in the room. Having professional support available is essential when considering the nature and sensitivity of the multiple workshops. Talking about parenting or relationships can often raise many

issues for young women. They have probably already experienced much discrimination and judgement from others and disagreement can be easily mistaken for criticism. Therefore having a professional in the room means these things can be managed and peer facilitators are free to focus on the discussion topics

- Respectful group discussion requires leadership by the peer facilitators so that every participant feels that their input is respected and valued. A peer facilitator needs to withhold judgements, share feelings and ideas and encourage others to do the same
 - Be prepared, have a number of questions and a plan of how you would like the session to go. This way you are more likely to be able to keep the discussion moving and on track. Often during discussion times the focus of the discussion can be lost, peer workers need to be aware of this and have ideas on how they can bring the group back to the intended focus
 - Peer workers need to discuss and have a joint understanding of how they will handle disclosure of personal information. When a participant discloses personal or private information in a group discussion peer workers should approach them during the next break and offer them the opportunity for a more private discussion
- Encourage questions from the group, but don't answer them yourself, ask the group to respond and allow them to come up with the answer themselves
 - Don't be afraid of silence. After you have asked a question or posed an idea, people need time to think and respond. After about 5 seconds, if no one has responded, restate the question and explain it further. If you are still not getting a response you may need to give an example yourself so that participants have a better idea of what you are looking for
 - Make a note of what everyone says during the discussion as this gives value to everyone's comments. This can be done on butcher's paper for everyone to see. At the end of the session summarize the session by going back over these points (you can ask one of the participants to do this for you)



Dealing with different levels of participation

- People may dominate discussion times regularly throughout the workshop, peer workers should maintain an awareness that this will happen. If a participant is being overly talkative and dominating the group thank them for their comments, but then divert the conversation to another member of the group. Asking questions directly to other members of the group can do this
- When a participant is shy and introverted they will need extra encouragement to participate in group discussion. Encourage them to take part in the discussion by asking them questions directly. Make sure these questions are not confronting and easy to answer. Make direct eye contact with them and thank them for their answer
- Peer facilitators may find themselves in a group, which has a member that challenges them and other participants. They may be argumentative and disagree regularly with what others have said. In this situation point out that everyone has different values and beliefs and it is important that everyone's ideas are respected. In this situation it is important to keep discussion moving

and not get caught up in disagreement about particular points. Remember no one is the expert here but everyone has their own experience to draw upon

- Participants need to be aware that rudeness, interrupting others and ignoring or dismissing other participant's contributions will not be accepted
- You may wish to make a group contract with the group at the beginning of the workshop. This allows everyone to have the opportunity to provide input on how they would like the group to work together. Some things you may have in your group contract are:
 - ~ Respect other people's ideas
 - ~ Differences are good
 - ~ No interrupting
 - ~ No insulting or offensive language
- It is important that this is done as a group with everyone agreeing to each point. The group contract will also need to be displayed where it can be easily viewed by all throughout the workshop

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a great way of generating lots of ideas within a group.

- Brainstorming should be done in a relaxed environment where participants can be as free with their answers as they want to be

- All ideas are valuable and should be included no matter how ridiculous and irrelevant they seem
- During a brainstorming session ideas should not be judged or criticised
- Only after the brainstorming session should ideas be discussed and evaluated

Procedure for brainstorming

1. Define the problem or idea to be brainstormed. Make sure everyone is clear on the topic being explored.
2. Set up the “rules” for the session. They should include:-
 - ~ Letting the facilitator lead the brainstorming exercise
 - ~ Allowing everyone to contribute
 - ~ Ensuring that no one will insult, demean or evaluate another participant or their response
 - ~ Stating that no answer is wrong
 - ~ Recording each answer and tick against previous answer if they are repeated
 - ~ Setting a time limit and stopping when that time is up

3. Start the brainstorming. The facilitator may need to select participants to share their answers. All answers should be written down on butchers paper so that they can be seen by all.
4. Once you have finished brainstorming, go through the results and begin evaluating the responses. Some initial qualities to look for when evaluating the responses include:-

- ~ Looking for any answers that are repeated or similar
- ~ Grouping like concepts together
- ~ Eliminating responses that don't fit
- ~ Now that you have narrowed your list down, discuss the remaining responses as a group



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Possible dilemmas/difficulties

While planning and during this workshop you must always keep in mind some of the dilemmas and difficulties that may arise for participants, peer facilitators and the group as a whole. Listed below are some of the dilemmas/difficulties that may occur. These can be overcome with little problem if the peer facilitators and participants are well prepared for them.

For Participants

- Other competing demands
- The complexity of their personal lives
- Business, tiredness, stressors of parenting
- Previous negative experiences of services and groups means they are wary
- Previous negative experiences of education or training programs
- Unrealistic expectations of the program and the peer facilitators
- Balancing experience and needs of children with participating in the group.

For Peer Facilitators

- Other competing demands
- The complexity of their personal lives

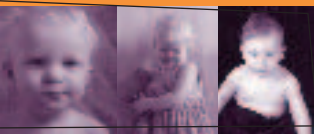
- Business, tiredness and the stressors of parenting
- Lack of adequate resources and professional support
- A need for clarity regarding their role

For the group

- Group dynamics may be rocky
- Established participants may become/appear territorial/too confident to newer participants
- Takes time for participants to get used to a new focus of group or a new group
- Personal issues may be raised for individuals that impact on how they participate in the group.
- Outside issues may be brought in to the group.

For Children

- Pre-school children are all at varying developmental stages in how they adjust to being in a social group setting
- Each day, each session children may need the attention and reassurance of their parent no matter how stimulating and well organised child care may be



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