



DISCUSSION FACILITATOR GUIDE

As the facilitator, your job is to guide a friendly, open, respectful conversation where everyone feels comfortable learning and sharing about student mental health topics.

Quick Checklist for Facilitators

- Review and pick 3-5 starter questions.
- Start with simple ground rules.
- Be flexible to let the conversation flow.
- Encourage everyone to share their thoughts.
- Handle tough moments with care.
- Wrap up with key takeaways and appreciation.

Before the Discussion

- Look at the questions submitted by your coworkers.
- Pick the ones that feel most relevant to your group's experiences or what they might be dealing with right now.
- Aim for 3-5 starter questions to get the conversation going.
- Be sensitive to topics that might bring up strong emotion. Let everyone know it's okay to take a break.
- Stay flexible! Be ready to go with the flow when the discussion gets going.

Starting the Discussion

- Set some simple ground rules — like being respectful, keeping things confidential, and listening without judgment. Work hard to draw out those more reluctant to speak by asking them open-ended questions.
- Ask the group if they'd like to cover other topics or if they have questions.
- A simple check-in or icebreaker can go a long way in creating a welcoming environment that encourages discussion.

(continued)

■ During the Discussion

- Use the questions as a starting point, but be open to following the group's lead.
- Open-ended follow-up questions can get everyone involved.
- Silence and time for reflection are okay — quiet moments can give people time to think.
- It's natural for group energy to shift. Acknowledge any concerns, reflect back what's been shared (“What I hear you saying is...”), and gently steer the group back to a more productive space by asking a question that focuses on what can be improved or changed.
- If emotions run high, offer support and remind everyone about available resources.

■ Navigating Difficult Moments

- Let people know it's normal to feel vulnerable (“It's okay not to have all the answers.”).
- Keep bringing the discussion back to what's useful and practical.
- If things get tense, stay calm, be respectful, and try to refocus on shared goals.

■ Closing the Discussion

- Wrap things up by going over the main takeaways and key themes.
- Invite everyone to share one final thought (e.g., “One takeaway from today?”).
- Thank the group for being part of the conversation.
- Share any helpful follow-up next steps or resources.