

## Leading Discussions

As the leader of an organization you will be required to lead discussions and meetings. The general responsibilities of a discussion leader are:

- 1) to promote discussion without dominating it,
- 2) to help people interact with each other in positive ways,
- 3) to keep the group task-oriented,
- 4) promote a climate of acceptance and openness, and
- 5) to know when to provide a sense of closure.

**Before leading a discussion, an effective leader must be aware of the following:**

- Shared understanding of terms and concepts.
- Established discussion goals.
- Allocation of time.
- Major subjects and sub-topics.
- Application of information.
- Clarification and Summary.
- Evaluation.

**Here are some guidelines for leading effective and productive discussions:**

- Ask questions that are more open than closed.
- Ask only one question at a time.
- Present questions to the whole group.
- Provide feedback as appropriate after a member responds.
- After initial question and response, follow up with probing questions.
- After a question be silent. Allow people time to answer.
- Use an inquiry style rather than an interrogation style.
- Encourage members to ask their own questions.
- Avoid echoing.
- Remain neutral during discussion.
- Prepare key questions ahead of time.
- Don't force people to talk.
- Don't try to make everyone agree.
- Begin with "non-threatening" agenda items.
- Keep things moving along...stay on the current topic