

5 More Tips for Facilitating Great Group Conversations



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[Today, we continue Donald Smith's series on facilitating great group discussions. Donald is is part of Care at North Point Ministries.—Ed.]

1. **Participate in the discussion only as needed.**

Your job isn't to teach or to dominate the conversation. Your job is to *guide* the conversation. The best way to do that is to allow the members of your group to do most of the talking. Be strategic about when you speak and what you say. It's good for your group members to hear examples from your own story. Just make sure you're not sharing those examples in a way that shuts down other discussion.

2. **Allow group members to help one another.**

One of the strengths of community is how people benefit from one another's stories. Common ground builds relationships and allows group members to minister to one another. Don't think it's your job to minister to every need of every member of your group. Community is more dynamic than that.

3. **Silence is important.**

Uncomfortable silences happen in groups. Be comfortable with them. Resist the temptation to jump in too soon. Doing so may discourage a group member who was about to speak. Introduce your group members to the idea that sometimes there will be silence, and that's okay. It'll ease their discomfort and encourage them to take a deep breath and jump into the discussion when they have something to say.

4. **Deal with tangents.**

Group discussions go off on tangents sometimes. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it's something you should monitor as the group's leader. Tangents can engage people in the discussion and get them to talk. They can also be a distraction or an annoyance.

Watching group members' eyes will help you tell the difference. Even good tangents need to be cut off at some point. Don't let them consume too much of the meeting time.

5. **Don't force conversation.**

If your group members have discussed an issue as much as they want, move on. If you keep pushing on an exhausted topic, it will sour the group environment.

How have you seen these five tips play out in your own leadership?