Facilitating Discussion

The following list identifies helpful hints for facilitating discussion within your small group:

- Create a **collaborative** environment

- Do an initial assessment of the **learners’ levels of readiness** and acknowledge any preparations they made for the session

- Initiate the interchange with an engaging, relevant challenge and use mainly open-ended questions and comments

- **Encourage** learners to participate
  - Allow enough “wait time” when questions are asked
  - Listen actively and non-judgmentally and encourage learners to do likewise
  - Keep the conversation from being dominated by a subset of learners
  - Build what learners said into the discussion
  - Make clear that your statements are open to being challenged

- Help learners communicate **clearly**
  - Ask for clarification and encourage learners to do likewise
  - Help learners reframe their ideas and comments, when needed
  - Help learners focus or expand their ideas, as needed

- Help learners be aware of and **examine their understandings, assumptions and values**

- Encourage **active listening**
  - Ask learners to paraphrase
  - Identify barriers to hearing others

- **Foster dialogue** among the learners

- Help learners **consider multiple points of view**

- Create an environment in which the learners feel they can **take risks**
  - Model risk taking
  - Support learners who take risks
  - Help learners be critical of ideas, not people
• Probe the learners’ understandings and foster higher-level thinking and discussion
• Invite the learners to elaborate, make connections, and think together
• Help the learners digest what they are hearing
• Acknowledge the learners’ feelings and your feelings
• Monitor and facilitate the flow of the session
• Help the group reach satisfactory closure, as needed