

## **TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM**

Review these details each time you plan to use a PrimeTime Health Peer Education Module. Following these tips can make the difference between an average program and a true learning experience.

### **PLANNING THE PROGRAM**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Is the program appropriate to the group's needs and interests?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is the program scheduled at an appropriate time? Am I part of a larger agenda?  
If so, what time is my presentation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is the length of the program suitable to the energy level and attention span of the participants?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has the program been advertised to the group?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have you confirmed the time and place (with PrimeTime Health coordinator or the site)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have you insured needed equipment will be available?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If people will need to write, are pens and writing surfaces available?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you prepared for the expected number?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If the module contains written materials, are they appropriate for the literacy level of the group?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have you insured water will be available for you and the group?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is the allocated space conducive to learning (free from noise and distractions)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Does my audience have any physical needs I should be prepared to accommodate (vision, hearing or mobility problems)?

### **PREPARING FOR YOUR PRESENTATION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Review the module you will be teaching. Each module is unique and is designed to meet the learning needs of the older adult.
- \_\_\_\_\_ As you read through the module, note items you will need for the presentation. They will be listed on the module cover sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider the space requirements of the program. If consumers are to participate in an activity, is there space? Is there display space, if needed?

### **CREATING A LEARNING CLIMATE**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Approach the group in a friendly, conversational manner. Be enthusiastic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use ice breakers, jokes, stories, etc. to "warm-up" the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Begin your talk with an overview of what you are going to cover.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Move around and get close to the participants. Fluctuate your voice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be flexible. Adapt to the responses and needs of the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use humor when possible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide a non-threatening atmosphere, which encourages participants to express their ideas, opinions, and personal experiences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide positive and constructive feedback to each participant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be aware of participant body language as a means of conveying involvement or withdrawal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask questions to stimulate participation in discussion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask questions which orient or reorient participants to the task or topic of discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognize when a problem exists in group interaction and determine if it should be discussed with the group or dealt with on an individual basis. You may need to call a break and take a problem participant aside. (See Handling Problem Participants.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Summarize your presentation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pass out evaluations and collect them when participants are finished.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review the evaluations for feedback on how to improve your session.

## **THE ENVIRONMENT**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Is the background noise free? Ask your site contact for help, if needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Please use a microphone. Speak clearly and project slowly in a moderate voice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use short sentences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask if everyone can hear and be alert to cues such as people leaning forward, turning their “good” ear toward them or cupping their ear. Ask people to volunteer to be a “buddy” to people with hearing or visual impairments by sitting next to them and explaining softly what is being said or shown (on a video, for example).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do not yell; it distorts sound. Face the audience when speaking to permit lip reading.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don’t “speak” to the screen if you are showing overheads.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Maintain eye contact.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don’t stand in front of a window. It is hard to look into glare.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you are using a blackboard, clean it ahead of time with a wet cloth to take away white glare or fuzziness from chalk dust.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don’t turn down lights unless you really must.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Adjust room temperature, if possible, to 70 - 72° F.

## **HANDLING PROBLEM PARTICIPANTS**

Below are some description of three common personality types and ways you can deal with them for the good of the support group. These examples are not inclusive of all types of personalities.

### **1) The Monopolizer**

Elsie consistently brings conversation back to herself, does not listen well, and interrupts others. She tends to deviate from the discussion topic and discuss details that are irrelevant to the group. As a result, she may draw valuable time and attention away from the group.

You might react to the monopolizer by affirming the importance of her comments and then suggesting that another group member build on something the monopolizer has said.

For example, you may redirect the conversation by saying, “That’s an interesting point, Elsie. Has anyone else had a similar experience?” or “You have a lot to contribute, Elsie but let’s see if anyone else has something to add.” You may also offer to speak to her alone after the meeting to follow up on ideas she initiated during the meeting.

At least some skipping, jumping ahead, and backtracking is inevitable. Here are some comments you can direct to the group rather than to an individual to help keep the discussion on track:

- “Is everyone satisfied that this is what we should be discussing?”
- “At this point, why don’t we summarize what we’ve just covered?”
- “Do you think we’ve talked about this long enough? If so, let’s move on to another issue.”
- “Is this directly related to our discussion?”

## 2) **The Quiet Person**

Marge is reluctant to speak. This can be a sign of withdrawal, shyness, or uneasiness.

You may encourage the quiet person to speak by saying, for example, “Marge, how do you feel about this?” If your initial attempt to draw a quiet person into the conversation fails, periodically ask the person for any comments. The person should be brought into the conversation gently, not forced to participate or embarrassed because of quiet nature.

You can experiment with these types of comments:

- “Marge you’ve been very quiet. Do you have anything you’d like to say?”
- “You’re shaking your head. Would you like to comment?”

As the meeting progresses, you may refer to the quiet person’s earlier comments or previous examples. Positive feedback for any comments the quiet person does make can be beneficial.

## 3) **The Know-It-All**

The know-it-all, Jackie, feels she has the answer to everything, and often asserts her opinion as fact. You may want to acknowledge Jackie’s comments but suggest that others may have different ideas that are equally important or useful. You may also try these types of comments:

- “Jackie, I realize that this technique may have worked for you, but it may not work for someone else. Every situation is somewhat different.”
- “We often find that there is more than one way to handle the same problem. Can anyone give me another suggestion?”

The know-it-all may simply be trying to clarify matters for herself by verbalizing them to the group.