

## SWRK 409

# FACILITATING ACTIVITIES

(Ragg, 2010, Garvin, 2011-2012)

There are three main practitioner actions when delivering instructions; setting the stage, providing instruction, and activating the group.

- **Setting the stage.** Some activities require advance work to make the activity possible. Often this involves practitioner work such as arranging chairs or providing materials. At other times members must take action such as gathering information to bring it into the next session. There are two important elements to setting the stage; providing focus and structuring the activity.
  - *Focusing the activity.* Identify the focus of the activity and the skills or behaviors that the members are expected to use (Davis & Butler, 2004; Somov, 2008).
  - *Structuring the activity.* We often need to position people, furniture, provide materials, or lay out the rules prior to beginning and activity (Davis & Butler, 2004; Somov, 2008).
- **Providing the instruction.** After the arrangements for the activity are complete provide very clear instructions so the members know what to do. Instructions can be verbal or written depending on the complexity of the activity. Consider the following systems of providing instructions.
  - *Three step instructions.* If providing verbal instructions it is easiest to lay out instructions in three steps. For example, “first I want you to identify when you are angry. When you notice your anger take notice of what is happening. Later, write down the thoughts that were going through your mind.”
  - *Step-wise instructions.* If the instructions are more complex you may want to break them down into specific steps or phases. For example, in a productive argument activity we may explain the four phases to a good argument, identifying a disagreement, clarifying the disagreement, exploration, and resolution. We can then provide instructions for each phase.
  - *Complex Instructions.* When there are several steps involved in the instructions, it can be difficult for clients to remember and respond. When engaging clients in complex activities it is very important to break the instructions into clear and logical steps. The steps should be logical and presented without a lot of explanation that can distract the members (Takimoto, 2007).
  - *Serial instruction.* Serial directives lay out one part of the instructions at a time. We begin with asking the client to engage in some action. When they begin the action we add a new instruction. As the new instruction is followed a new caveat is included. These additions continue until the full range of activities are complete. When using serial instructions it is important to structure input so each step is logically connected to the next (Takimoto, 2007).
- **Activating the Group.** The final step in providing instructions is to activate the members so they are performing. This involves disengaging from the highly active role of providing instructions so we can begin to monitor the client performance.
  - *Direct the member's first actions.* Sometimes we need to instruct one client to start. For example, “Tell Tom what you felt as he shared his story...” or “Think about what you just said and tell how your past is haunting you decision.” Notice how the practitioner statement triggers client actions allowing the practitioner to adopt a scanning role.