



SETTING GROUP NORMS

Active training groups require direction and guidance. One of the first steps in gaining leadership of a group and promoting group cohesion is to set up ground rules that provide agreements about how the group will interact and work with each other. Setting positive group norms through opening exercises can go a long way toward preventing negative situations to arise during training. One way to accomplish this is to provide a list of several possible ground rules. The list can be posted on a large chart so everyone can see it. First ask the group if there are any additional rules that they would like to add to the list, record any suggestions. Then ask each participant to select three that they consider most important from the list. There are several ways to tabulate the results:

1. Use a show of hands (record the tally next to each statement on the chart)
2. Give each person 3 colored sticker dots and ask them to place the dots next to their three choices.

The following group norms might be included on the list:

- Be punctual (sessions, breaks, lunch, small group work)
- Let others finish what they are saying without being interrupted
- Show respect for each other's opinions
- Be brief and to the point when speaking
- Agree to disagree
- Give everyone a chance to speak
- Build on each other's ideas
- Sit next to different people

Keep the agreed upon group norms posted near your group so you can refer to them if necessary. It helps to be able to point to "be punctual" and say, "Remember that we all agreed to be back from breaks on time". Starting off the day with a quick review of the group norms and end the day with compliments to the group for following the norms.