

# harm reduction support groups

## an introduction for facilitators

WRITTEN BY

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[www.baltimoreharmreduction.org](http://www.baltimoreharmreduction.org)

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## What's this about?

Every once in a while we get a facebook message or email that asks about harm reduction support group options in the area. We often don't know how to reply and at the time we didn't have options for every gender and age group.

About two years ago some therapists reached out individually, asking if we had a harm reduction-based curriculum they could use. They wanted to pitch the use of such a curriculum to their organizations where there was already established support groups. (Sometimes they wanted resources to just go for it without 'permission' from their workplace.)

While these requests largely centered around harm reduction for drug use, we know that most people also have sex. This isn't different for people who go to abstinence-based substance use groups, or a clinic for HIV treatment, or for survivors of relationship violence. And sometimes people are trading sexual services for needed resources (like money).

So when the opportunity to spend some time digging into the resources for new(er) harm reduction facilitators presented itself, we thought that we'd have to do something. What is contained here is what we came up with. It is not a curriculum. It's a guide--with tips, suggestions, and encouragement. We do not cover how to message the importance of harm reduction or the idea of transforming already running groups into having a greater harm reduction focus.

For suggestions, tips, and encouragement there we suggest trying to find a coach or mentor, since feedback and ideas will be very context specific. Mentors can be remote--you could utilize phone calls, video chats, and so on! Harriet has had a handful of phone calls with a mentor--Louise Vincent--who she was matched with by Christine Rodriguez for a project of Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore. Harriet found the calls to be validating, relieving, and a helpful outside perspective.

This project has been midwived with advice and coordination by the following people (in alphabetical order):

- ★ **Mariah Guarnaccia** (harm reduction services coordinator and case manager with Youth Empowered Society) -- she is a practiced harm reduction case manager, particularly with young people and families; she soaks up information wherever she goes, is a genuinely transparent facilitator, and deeply cares about just practice; until her recent move to California, she ran harm reduction support groups for young people who use drugs.
- ★ **Harriet Smith** (Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and facilitator with Baltimore Racial Justice Action) -- she is excited to continually hone and grow her facilitation skills, which she has had the opportunity to do through being a peer health educator in college, substitute middle school teacher, Baltimore Racial Justice Action trainer, chronic illness support group facilitator, and now as a trainer with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition; she has participated in

mental health support groups, is a life-long Baltimore resident, and isn't going anywhere.

- ★ **Adam Tannebaum** (masters of social work student at Smith College) -- they have a wealth of experience in facilitating groups, especially groups struggling with issues of stigma and marginalization, including sexual identity and practices, coping with and surviving trauma, and drug use; they are the kind of person you want to tell your whole life story to; until recently when they moved back to New York state, they ran groups at a local medication assisted treatment provider.
- ★ **Reah Vasilakopoulos** (student intern from Johns Hopkins University) -- she is eager to expand her facilitation skills and has had opportunities to bring her skills and grow them in her role as trainer with BHRC; she has experience talking about drug use with a variety of groups and individuals, and is a sexual assault survivors advocate; she is from New York City and is living in Baltimore while she completes school.

### *Attribution & Giving Credit*

Knowledge about facilitation—including tips, suggestions, exercises, and other guidance—is not easy to give credit or attribution to. Each of us has had, and continues to have, many mentors and co-conspirators, and each one of the people who contributed to this project has been a participant in a variety of workshop or support group settings. We all learn from those experiences; and we also learn from feedback forms and other sources of direct feedback from participants. In many ways, we wish we could have asked for a lineage of each idea that gets shaped, reshaped, and reinvented with each person and with each facilitation.

You will see footnotes throughout, as well as attribution and resources at the end of each section. Many times the idea being credited to a specific person or group was echoed by other people and groups. We did our best to credit the people who explicitly said the thought or idea, even if it was backed up through what others implied. Our attributions and crediting is certainly imperfect. We do hope, however, that it honors the people who spent their energy and time sharing their expertise as both facilitators and participants.

Just as this guide gives credit and attribution to those who shared their knowledge and time with us, we hope that you will credit the resources used in your work, honor where those contributions have come from, and continue to share your learning with those around you. To learn and grow together, we need to recognize those who have helped us along the way.

We also have an extensive Appendix with more details, examples, checklists, and all the in-the-weeds content we could gather.

# Harm Reduction: An Imperfect Introduction

*“At its heart, the harm reduction movement is a close-knit family of dreamers, radicals, and outsiders, tempering anger with hope, fighting stigma and marginalization with love.”*

Daniel Raymond  
Policy Director with Harm Reduction Coalition<sup>1</sup>

## What is harm reduction?

Harm reduction is a philosophy and a set of practices that can assist individuals in being safer and be applied to make organizations and systems less harmful. Harm reduction is applied to stigmatized and criminalized behaviours, including sex, sex work, and drug use. We often use the following slogans:

- ★ Meeting people where they're at, but not leaving them there
- ★ Avoiding placing judgment
- ★ Acknowledging the significance of any positive change
- ★ Engaging in radical love<sup>2</sup>

Harm reduction, as a whole, can change how we move through the world and interact with one another.<sup>3</sup> In the face of laws and systems designed to oppress--harm reduction is resilience, connection, and love.

At the **individual level**, harm reduction expands choices, increases access, and promotes opportunities to help people be safer. This can include access to, knowledge about, and use of barriers and/or boundaries during sex, sterile syringes for injections, buddy systems, etc.

Drug use, sex, and sex work have been stigmatized and criminalized through oppressive policy and culture; society has historically increased harm to people who engage in drug use and sex work.

Since we're talking about support group facilitation, here are some examples of individual harm reduction strategies (please note that changing policy, laws, culture, etc. could be explored in group facilitation):

- LEARNING ABOUT SAFER INJECTION PRACTICES (E.G. VARIOUS GAUGE SIZES FOR DIFFERENT INJECTION SITES)
- GAINING CONSISTENT ACCESS TO STERILE NEEDLES
- SEEING A PROVIDER TO RECEIVE MEDICATION OR OTHER HEALTHCARE TREATMENT
- CREATING A BUDDY OR CHECK-IN SYSTEM FOR DRUG USE OR SEX
- ATTENDING SUPPORT GROUPS

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<sup>1</sup> written in: <https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/communication17-final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Doug Fuller, Baltimore-based harm reduction advocate (2017)

<sup>3</sup> Christine Rodriguez, Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore (2019)

At the **institutional level**, harm reduction aims to shift organizations, systems, and our broader society to be safer for both individuals and communities. This includes increasing access to needed safer use and safer sex supplies, repealing and replacing laws that criminalize and cause harm, and accountability for organizations and systems that have caused harm. It also includes increasing and improving resources for communities targeted through divestment and violence, and otherwise oppressed by racism and other systems of oppression. These systems often use the stigma around sex and drugs to gain acceptance and strength. Reparations are a part of making communities whole.

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### **A note on the history of resistance and survival in Maryland<sup>4</sup>**

While the term harm reduction may be newer, the idea of surviving unjust laws and oppressive systems is not. Baltimore, Maryland, and the United States are not new spaces of resistance to injustice. Actions of survival, communities looking out for one another, and fighting injustice were happening centuries before the term 'harm reduction' came to be.

We continue to be inspired by Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and other racial justice warriors; by the strong tradition of labor organizing; and by the HIV/AIDS activists who demanded Baltimore start a needle exchange program in 1994.

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A lot of us get asked questions about and challenged with myths around 'enabling.' We also tend to hear from others that harm reduction is acceptable as long as there is an expectation that the behavior will stop at some point.

***"You're enabling"***

Harm reduction enables greater safety. Harm reduction is rooted in reality, respecting individuals and communities, and increasing safety by supporting people through 1:1 strategies and changing society.

***"We can help now, but they'll eventually stop. Right?"***

Harm reduction does not require a specific end goal. Harm reductionists rarely take a stance that all drug use or sex is great or all is horrible. We recognize that change is challenging, not linear, and an immensely individual process.

### ***Why harm reduction?***

Harm reduction comes back to humanity. We believe that everyone deserves safety, health, and dignity, simply for the reason that they are human. Harm reduction is an approach in which people can make choices that best fit their schedules, needs, desires, goals, future visions, and lives as a whole.

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<sup>4</sup> Harriet Smith and Rajani Gudlavalleti, Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (2018)

Because of the variety and individuality of change-making processes, there can be countless examples of harm reduction for any person. Expanding access, increasing choices, and promoting opportunities to help people be safer need to be non-coercive, non-judgmental, flexible, and creative.

**The importance of language:** When working closely with people who use drugs and people who sell sex, being as non-stigmatizing as possible is part of creating a welcoming environment. Removing stigma from how you refer to various experiences helps to build rapport. The aim is to avoid adding to shame perpetuated by society at large and offer a space of acceptance.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, it is important to avoid re-traumatizing people who have already experienced harm from stigma—both interpersonal and societal. Stigma can present itself in many ways: phrasing, tone, body language, and assumptions about others' experiences.<sup>6</sup>

We often use our own language to refer to ourselves. Each individual gets to do this, and that is their choice to describe their experience as they wish.

*"If I say I'm a 'crazy person' because I have a mental illness that interferes with my life, that's for me to say. If someone else used the term 'crazy' in reference to me, it takes on a whole different meaning and I'd have a hard time ever trusting or respecting them."*

Harriet Smith

**Attribution:** A majority of this section was created by various staff at Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, but are continually to be inspired by and thankful for so many individuals and organizations that have informed us.

We'd like to specifically acknowledge the following people and groups that contributed to this section:

- Daniel Raymond, with Harm Reduction Coalition
- Doug Fuller, Baltimore-based harm reduction advocate
- Chicago Recovery Alliance and their [Harm Reduction Protocol](#)
- Christine Rodriguez, with Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore
- Harm Reduction Action Center and [their Person-First Language Guide](#)

**Additional Resources for this Section:**

- Harm Reduction Action Center: [Harm Reduction Fact Sheet](#)
- Harm Reduction Coalition [website](#) (multiple resources)
- Magenta: [What is Harm Reduction?](#)
- Open Society Foundations: [Harm reduction-related articles](#)
- Positive Women's Network: [Harm Reduction Factsheet](#)

<sup>5</sup> Harm Reduction Action Center, [Person-First Language Guide](#)

<sup>6</sup> Christine Rodriguez, Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore. Presentation on "Harm Reduction 101: Stigma, Trauma, & People Who Use Drugs" (2019)

## Safety and Supplies--Briefly!

Incorporating harm reduction practices, whether as an individual or in a facilitated group setting, typically involves conversation about safety. For individuals, this usually involves exploring ways to make changes in everyday practices, including getting supplies or information that can be utilized to minimize risk. For group settings, taking a harm reduction approach can include the way that the group is facilitated, the topics that are chosen for discussion, willingness to sit with contradiction and nuance, and so on.

Oftentimes, groups rooted in harm reduction will bring up many of the possible strategies an individual can use to increase safety. From making small tweaks to a routine to incorporate safety planning for the future. Being honest, transparent, cooperative, and sharing information is what we have found harm reduction groups have in common.

Similar to the variety of harm reduction practices, there is just as much variety within supplies and strategies for safer drug use and safer sex.

Regardless of whether or not group participants are currently having sex or using drugs, as a facilitator, it is still important to know information related to safer practices. Meeting people where they're at, but not leaving them there, involves being understanding about wherever someone is and where they may be in the future. Learning about safer strategies and supplies is a good foundational step for being supportive, flexible, and non-judgmental as a facilitator (and as a human being).

We hope for facilitators to feel empowered by the information and resources in this section, as well as to feel encouraged to continue their learning beyond this guide. There is always more to discover about supporting the safety of ourselves and others.

Lastly, we wish to note that facilitation is not just imparting knowledge upon a group, but involves a large amount of flexibility.<sup>7</sup> If you are unsure where to start this type of conversation, try to be guided by the needs someone is expressing.

Asking questions like "Why do you use?" and "How do you use?" help to clarify where safety and supplies might fit in (e.g. supply suggestions specific to their drugs of choice).<sup>8</sup> In a group setting, it can be powerful to allow the group to have the conversation they would like to have and share wisdom/tips with one another.

### **Make sure you know something about:**

- Safer Drug Use Practices (including but not limited to injection)
- Safer practices relating to having sex and selling sex
- Safety Planning (for mental health crisis and emotional distress, and physical safety)

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<sup>7</sup> Rajani Gudlavalleti, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and facilitator with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (2019)

<sup>8</sup> Mariah Guarnaccia, Harm Reduction Coordinator and Case Manager, Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)



**Attribution:** A majority of this section was compiled from what the authors have been taught and experienced over the years. There are a great number of documents on these subjects. We wish we could include more in this section, but also we don't want to recreate what is already out there by people who use drugs in various ways and who sell sex in a variety of settings--who are the clear experts on strategies and supplies.

We'd like to specifically acknowledge the following people and groups that we've learned a lot from:

- Shayla Alfonzo, with SPARC Center, Johns Hopkins, and various other roles
- Andrew Bell, Baltimore-based harm reduction advocate with various titles
- Willie Bryant, with Bmore POWER
- Doug Fuller, Baltimore-based harm reduction advocate
- Jacqui Robarge and all the women with Power Inside
- Christine Rodriguez, with Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore

**Additional Resources for this Section:**

- Dancesafe's [website](#) and materials
- Harm Reduction Action Center:
  - *Benzodiazepine: A Harm Reduction Guide* (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#))
  - *Methamphetamine: A Harm Reduction Guide* (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#))
  - *Wound Care: A Harm Reduction Guide* (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#))
- Harm Reduction Coalition [website](#) (multiple resources)
  - [Getting Off Right Handbook](#)
- HOOK, in partnership with Harm Reduction Coalition: [Male Sexwork Handbook](#)
- International Network of People Who Use Drugs, in partnership with The Global Network of Sex Work Projects: [Sex Workers Who Use Drugs: experiences, perspectives, needs, and rights](#)
- North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition:
  - [Safer Injection Drug Use](#)
  - [Safer Sex Work](#)
- RollSafe: [Drug Harm Reduction: List of What You Should Know](#)
- Sex Worker Outreach Project: [Learn About Sex Work](#)

# A Little About Group Facilitation

*“Facilitation is encouraging buds to bloom.”* - Barbara Allen<sup>9</sup>

Facilitation is often described as an art, a practice, and a learning tool. We hope the remainder of this guide offers support, encouragement, and that, along with the Appendix and Resources, it offers you some tangible strategies for facilitating support groups of many kinds. In this section we have included some thoughts on:

- *Who is in the room? And who are you, as the facilitator?*
- *General tips*
- *Group agreements*
- *Mechanisms and strategies for group discussion*
- *Activities that you can easily modify to fit your group*

We aim for these strategies and notes to support you through preparation, facilitation, and debrief. There are countless ways to facilitate; all of the ideas here will be helpful for some and not for others.

There are more facilitation-related resources in the world than we can imagine, so we hope that you use this information as a starting point for further learning. We encourage you to find what interests you, debrief with other facilitators whom you know and trust, and allow yourself the room to grow.

*Who is in the Room?*

**Motivations (why did folks show up):** Facilitation includes preparation and this may mean considering who else will be in the room—what might they hope to get out of the meeting, where might points of tension arise, and so on.

You can explore this question ahead of time with co-facilitators and mentors, in addition to within the group with participants. We've done pre-surveys, pre-interviews, check-ins at the start of groups, and various activities that get at this question.

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*Check-in suggestion from Christine Rodriguez: start a workshop or training by asking everyone to share their name, one thing they hope to get out of the day, and one thing that challenges them about harm reduction.*

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<sup>9</sup> with James' Place, is a long-time facilitator for grief support groups, bereaved parent and sibling (2019)

<sup>10</sup> with Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore. Shared from her presentation on Harm Reduction 101: Stigma, Trauma, & People Who Use Drugs (2019)

**Who am I and who are the participants:** Preparation and facilitation have required us to constantly ask ourselves what experiences do people bring to the space and what support might they need—in different moments—to participate in ways that support their learning and wellbeing.

There is a wealth of knowledge and experience when it comes to how to facilitate learning in groups where the experiences of the group members may overlap in some ways and diverge in others. Please see the appendix for additional resources. We suggest always trying to locate yourself within the topic and prepare by exploring your role in the group regardless of whether or not you share in common some of what brings participants to the group.

The group's energy, perspectives, comfortability with one another, willingness to share, and interest in the topics at-hand all impact facilitation. Preparing by examining motivations can help you to tailor your facilitation for the group. This can happen prior to a meeting, but it can also occur during one of the initial sessions or in later sessions. Knowing the group and what might be helpful is not a one-time consideration: it continues and will likely be in the back of your mind as you go through facilitation.

Additionally, preparing yourself for facilitation might focus on the question of 'what if?' Try to reflect individually or with another person you trust on different scenarios that may occur, how you can respond as the facilitator, and the effectiveness of that response. Though this practice--which takes practice and patience--it can be helpful to prepare for situations when group members may be upset, have disagreement, be shocked, or have other strong emotions.

**Some explanation and thoughts on caucusing or affinity spaces:** It's likely not news to you that our identities and experiences affect our lives in countless ways: how we move through everyday life, who we choose to bring into our lives, where we feel safest, what dangers do we face, and what thoughts go through our minds on a regular basis. Support groups, generally, touch on successes, fears, struggles, acceptance, and personal growth in some way—all of which can be specific to how someone sees themselves and the marginalization and oppression they might experience.

Some support groups choose to function as shared-identity spaces, in which every person in the group shares a specific identity. The shared identity can support the group members through common struggles, create an environment in which they may feel more safe to share their thoughts, and express frustration with intersecting systems of oppression in their life.

Examples could be a space for women who use drugs to support one another or a space for men who are survivors of sexual trauma to learn grounding techniques. In these examples, the group who is gathering may be assumed to be the numerical minority in groups exploring the topics if it was open to all genders. You can consider the benefits and drawbacks of being in a mixed race group and what the role of affinity spaces might be in various discussions. If caucusing or affinity grouping is an aspect of the space expect push-back and be prepared to explain the importance of this kind of space. It's important to note that the facilitator is not exempt from the caucusing guidelines (aka it's not okay to have a straight person lead your queer group).

*“Affinity groups are an effective means through which people can reaffirm and explore aspects of their identity, as well as provide each other guidance and support for interacting with those who might not share, understand, or respect that identity...”*

Ali Micahel and Mary C. Conger<sup>11</sup>

**Safe(r) spaces:** Creating spaces for people to be vulnerable is challenging. Especially since what might be a safe space for one person is not necessarily safe for everyone.<sup>12</sup> Listening to the group and what works best for them is a great first step to creating community. Additionally, the strategy of being an “invested facilitator” involves being invested in the care of everybody and the context in which things happen within the group--this includes addressing oppression and any power imbalances in the group.<sup>13</sup>

**Knowing yourself:** Exploring your inner thoughts, biases, personal experiences, and everything that makes you unique—can lead to challenge, reflection, and discovery. Yet, we’ve found it to be an important part of how one facilitates. We bring ourselves into every space; your values values and experiences. We hope that you will consider how those aspects of your life show up when you’re facilitating.

***It can be helpful to reflect on who you are as a participant in thinking about yourself as a facilitator.***

- What presentation or group styles do you find helpful?
- What kinds of conversations included vulnerability/sharing/learning? How was that achieved?

From the above experiences, you can identify some activities or strategies to use in your own work, what you may want to avoid, and specific things you admired about the facilitators you’ve had that you can emulate.

***At the end of the day, you can focus on the following:***<sup>14</sup>

- Making sure that everyone has a chance to have their ideas and feelings expressed
- Keeping the discussion moving in a direction, that is somewhat on topic, without rushing or requiring to share when they aren't able
- Maintaining a safe and respectful group environment where the group has taken ownership of what safety and respect mean to them

**Sharing your own experiences or opinions:** Because facilitators encourage participants to share, engage with the topic or discussion, and learn from one another, we are meant to be prompting the group from a nonjudgmental place as opposed to sharing your own thoughts (in most cases). Sometimes redirecting from a back and forth between participants and facilitator (instead of the group to one another) can be challenging. Particularly when topics are

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<sup>11</sup> [“Becoming an Anti-Racist White Ally: How a White Affinity Group Can Help.”](#) 2009

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, AA participant (2019)

<sup>13</sup> Shared by Lauren Abramson, Founding Director of Community Transformation. Strategy shared with Lauren by a colleague at Community Transformation. (2019)

<sup>14</sup> Members and leaders of Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019): Dre B, Chy, “Beanie,” Aliah, and Ian Beam

important to us or when we have strong opinions. Remaining in 'facilitator mode'<sup>15</sup> does not mean that you do not have opinions or that you never share them. Instead, you might want to rely on the group to respond first (which can also give you a second to collect your thoughts).

*"How do the rest of you feel about that?"*

*"Does anyone want to weigh in on that question/idea?"*

*"Thanks for sharing that experience. I have some thoughts, but I'm wondering if anyone else has another example, first."*

Though some facilitators find it helpful to share their own thoughts as a way to spark the sharing of others, it can be hard to recognize when your own opinion might be too persuasive among the group.<sup>16</sup> Thus, you may choose to share about yourself and your own beliefs, but do so with caution—you do not want to affect people's feelings of safety and comfort within the space, push the conversation in an entirely different direction, nor impose your own beliefs on someone else.

**Dynamics to consider related to you sharing and 'Self Disclosure':** During facilitation, it is important to check in with yourself and the group on what and how experiences and knowledge are shared. For instance, how often do you--as facilitator--talk? Perhaps, the less you talk, the more the group is learning from one another.<sup>17</sup>

As the facilitator, you are also in the position where you can address varied dynamics of sharing amongst group members. We've found that there are some great tips from AORTA.<sup>18</sup> They have published tips for combating unhelpful power dynamics and ways to supporting marginalized participants within your group.

There are also many resources on self-disclosure as a facilitator. Often 'peer-to-peer' guides discuss self-disclose the most. We haven't found a favorite source yet, but we've learned a lot through peer educator trainings we've been through and through infectious disease testing, counseling, and referral trainings.

***In thinking about disclosure and sharing her own experience, Harriet often (tries to remember to) asks herself:***

- *Am I disclosing to help me or them?*
- *Will sharing my experience add something to the discussion that isn't already here?*
- *Will sharing my experience set up a false idea of a 'right way' or exert influence that shuts others down?*

*\*We don't do it perfect every time, and I definitely don't ask myself these questions enough--but they're here when I remember them!*

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<sup>15</sup> A term Harriet learned from A. Adar Ayira, a founder of Baltimore Racial Justice Action

<sup>16</sup> Rajani Gudlavallefi, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and facilitator with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (2019)

<sup>17</sup> Nick Brooks, Workforce Development Coordinator, Youth Empowered Society (2019)

<sup>18</sup> <http://aorta.coop/>

**You obviously have to know everything, right?:** Of course you don't know everything! Checking in with yourself is pushing back against the idea that you, as the facilitator, know everything or that you have to know everything before you can be the least bit helpful.

Many harm reduction strategies and suggestions are defined and approached differently by each person. If someone offers a particularly challenging situation to the group, allow the group some time to collectively come up with an answer. If they do not know where to go, then you can share your thoughts and relevant tools/resources. In your role as facilitator, you are encouraged to admit when you do not have an answer.

It may seem obvious, but we're going to share it again anyways: Remaining transparent that you do not know everything and offering to research or learn about something new can be more helpful than an unsure answer.<sup>19</sup>

Often times, facilitators are in a role of authority or power to some degree, meaning that what you share might affect what everyone else will be comfortable saying. With this in mind, it is important to be cautious about the thoughts, biases, and judgments you may be sharing (intentionally or unintentionally).<sup>20</sup> Additionally, reflect on how you can share some of the power you hold as a facilitator within decision-making, facilitation strategy, etc.<sup>21</sup>

**Biases and Stuck Points:** As a facilitators, part of our role of remaining discerning but not judgemental involves knowing our own prejudices and biases. Every one of us holds biases. In all of our lives, it is normal to take things personally, to not always have the right answer, and to feel strongly about things close to your heart.

Stuck points are situations or topics that challenge you personally, points where you feel yourself bringing on judgment, and times when you feel stuck or that you do not know how to respond.<sup>22</sup> Essentially, stuck points leave you questioning where to go next. They may not be readily apparent before you start facilitating, or you may already have an idea of things that you find challenging. If you are unsure of what might get you stuck, take some time to reflect on your own prior to facilitation:

- *What issues are you most passionate about?*
- *What do you feel strongly about within your personal life?*
- *What challenges you about harm reduction?*
- *If these challenging topics are brought up within the group:*
  - *What would you be thinking?*
  - *What would you say?*

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<sup>19</sup> Willie Bryant, Bmore POWER, SMART Recovery Participant and Facilitator (2019)

<sup>20</sup> Brittaney Caron, therapist. Toronto, Canada (2019)

<sup>21</sup> Nick Brooks, Workforce Development Coordinator, Youth Empowered Society (2019)

<sup>22</sup> This is Harriet's term and we don't think it is a widely used term for the topics or dynamics where you feel like you are out of ideas or your gut reaction makes it hard to proceed--it was also hard for us to find a widely accepted term.

**From talking with many different facilitators,  
we have found that common stuck points are:**

- *handling opposing harm reduction opinions/language from within the group,*
- *responding to highly-stigmatizing statements,*
- *our own judgment towards statements we disagree with or our own judgement (including disappointment) towards continued behavior (outside the group) that we hoped would change, and*
- *being questioned about personal experience with substance use, sex, illness, etc.*

To move past a stuck point in the moment, remember that you can take time to breathe and re-center yourself as well as the group. Try a grounding exercise, journaling, taking a break, or passing off to a co-facilitator.

*When responding in moments with her stuck points, Harriet has found it helpful to lean on hypotheticals and push the question or conversation back to the group.*

*Asking questions like: "How would somebody else answer that?" or "Even if you agree with what was shared, what could you say back to that viewpoint?" can get group members to reflect individually about the topic and ease building tension (even if it's just the facilitator's tension).*

Many facilitators suggested debriefing with fellow facilitators, particularly facilitators who you trust. You can also debrief with participants after you've collected yourself and your thoughts. A debrief with a co-facilitator or facilitation mentor can happen right afterwards, the day after, or a week after, depending on when you feel ready and prepared to talk and to receive feedback. By recounting the situation and asking "How would you have handled this?," you can learn from others.

**Facilitation = Learning:** All in all, we hope to leave you with the recognition that being a facilitator involves a lot of practice, trust, patience, and above all, learning and growth. When we asked people about what they have learned from their work as facilitators, they shared:

- *"The facilitator can't control the space. All you can do can just hold it."<sup>23</sup>*
- *"Invest your time in understanding your privileges and how they show up."<sup>24</sup>*
- *"To tamp down anxiety and fear you're feeling about facilitation, do whatever it is you do regularly to let go of the fear you have in your life."<sup>25</sup>*
- *"You can't solve someone's problem for them."<sup>26</sup>*
- *Supporting someone should not be about disappointing or impressing you: it should be about what they want.<sup>27</sup>*

Throughout your own facilitation experiences, take time to reflect and debrief on your own or with fellow facilitators. We have included a few sample debrief worksheets in the Appendix.

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<sup>23</sup> Rajani Gudlavalleti, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and facilitator with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (2019)

<sup>24</sup> Lauren Abramson, Founding Director of Community Transformation (2019)

<sup>25</sup> sam kerr, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (2019)

<sup>26</sup> Willie Bryant, Bmore POWER, SMART Recovery Participant and Facilitator (2019)

<sup>27</sup> Brittaney Caron, therapist. Toronto, Canada (2019)

## General Tips

Over the course of creating this guide, we have received countless suggestions, strategies, advice, and tips for facilitators. We hope that this section will encourage you to strengthen your facilitation skills, learn more about the process, and give you ideas of how you can fit your facilitation to the group you are working with.

**Advice for Newer Facilitators:** Beginning your journey as a facilitator can be at times overwhelming, challenging, or nerve-racking; at its core, facilitation is a learning process. To aid in that learning, we asked fellow facilitators for their advice for people just starting out as facilitators.

*Practice makes better. Trust that you will learn over time.*

Barbara Allen

*Try not to take things personally. Do what you're feeling. Go with your gut.*

Rajani Gudlavalleti

*Help the group share the space; but at the same time that might be the only space that [talkative] person has, keep them on track and relate it back.*

Aliah

*No one wants to do (or wants the facilitator to read off of) worksheets every day.*

Harriet Smith

*Know your speed. Slow down in general.*

sam kerr

*Be patient. You don't know what will come in the door. Be patient and pivot, when needed.*

"Beanie"

*Assume nothing, and expect that people are going to do the best they can.*

Lauren Abramson

*When you're unsure, go back to what you know best: respect, compassion, dignity, and non-judgment.*

Christine Rodriguez

*Don't have a favorite, someone might feel like you're not invested in them.*

Chey

*Be transparent about your mistakes, your process, and even when you might be nervous.*

Mariah Guarnaccia



**On learning from mistakes you make as a facilitator**, Daniel Dykes from the Baltimore Community Mediation Center shared:

*“An effective facilitator makes space for transformation and models humanity and imperfection for everyone else, creating a safe landing spot for ideas, behaviours, pushback, and friction. Successful facilitators emerge from difficult experience, and are measured not by the number of missteps, but their ability to transmute those missteps into learning.”*

**Preparing Logistics:** As you no doubt know, facilitation work begins before the facilitator even enters the space; planning logistics such as group size, the physical environment, and an agenda (written or otherwise) is often the first step. See Appendix for specific ideas on each of these.

**Gauging the Room:** Reading or gauging the room is often described as taking the temperature of the room or seeing where everyone is at emotionally, physically, and mentally. You can do so at the start with a check-in question and throughout (and between) sessions.

Beyond an initial check-in, gauging the room takes practice and patience. Many facilitators might find it helpful to have a co-facilitator, so one person can be more observant while the other facilitates. Here are some suggestions to start you off for gauging the room:

- Listen with intent. Pay attention to what is being said, what is being implied, and underlying patterns.
- Look for changes in body language.
- If someone has been talking for a while about a particular topic and you notice other members rolling their eyes or grimacing, that is an indicator for a topic or speaker change.<sup>28</sup>
- Facial expressions can be valuable as well to see if someone is processing, confused, upset, waiting to talk, angry, tired, or any combination of emotions.<sup>29</sup>
- Know that silence will happen—it is not always an indicator of disinterest. Silence can be a good time to reflect or gather thoughts just before sharing.
- Look for signs of confusion (e.g. blank facial expression, asking questions quietly to other group members). If the group is confused, be ready to answer their questions, backtrack on your agenda/plan, and possibly spend more time than you planned on a certain idea.
- Let the group direct the conversation/meeting around what they need.
- If people seem to not be feeling up to what is happening, take time to talk with the group about what to do next. Do you want to end the meeting early, take a break, or do a different activity?<sup>30</sup>

**Education and Content:** Often, harm reduction education can be well-meaning, yet it does not meet someone's established needs or is a repeat of what they have been told time and time

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<sup>28</sup> Nick Brooks, Workforce Development Coordinator, Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)

<sup>29</sup> sam kerr, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (2019)

<sup>30</sup> Rajani Gudlavalleti, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and facilitator with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (2019)

again. As we've touched on throughout this guide, harm reduction involves being understanding, flexible, supportive, creative, and non-judgmental. We hope that before planning educational meetings, there are explicit conversations with possible participants about what the group desires and needs.

*Take time to recognize group wisdom and collective knowledge before you go into "educator mode"—most times, at least one person in the group will know something about what you are about to share.*

Rajani Gudlavalleti

**Working with Specific Groups:** In talking to facilitators who have worked with a variety of audiences, we collected many tips on how to best be a facilitator with different groups.

For working with **young people who use drugs**:

- You may feel an instinct to go into a 'parental place' and be overprotective. Check in with yourself frequently about the usefulness and necessity of what you're hoping to share with them.<sup>31</sup>
- It may take some time to get a young person to share what's really going on. There is a lot of secrecy and stigma with certain kinds of drug use among young people.<sup>32</sup>
- Start conversations with what they want to do and how it makes them feel.<sup>68</sup>
- Spend time validating their experiences and pushing back against internalized stigma.<sup>33</sup>
- Often, young people have not found their drug-using community yet. They may ask for more support on how to use in specific ways or how to cope with certain challenges.<sup>69</sup>

Facilitators planning to work with a group of **people who are currently using drugs**:<sup>34</sup>

- Use multiple mediums (videos, writing on dry erase boards) to engage.
- When doing myth-busting, validate why the information seems truthful and have an open conversation about it.
- Make your education and discussions realistic.
- Include structured breaks (and recognize that it takes 7 min to smoke a cigarette!).
- Create space for people to engage however they want: they can draw, write things down, stand, sit, walk around, shut eyes if needed.

For working with a **mixed group** (e.g. some people who currently use, some who are currently abstinent from drugs):

- Have the group focus on a particular topic that you can use as a lens. It focuses the group on how they may have things in common to share and allows space for people to vent.<sup>35</sup>
- Recognize when to step in for conflict between different people in the group.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Dykes, Baltimore Community Mediation Center (2019)

<sup>32</sup> Brittaney Caron, therapist. Toronto, Canada (2019)

<sup>33</sup> Mariah Guarnaccia, Harm Reduction Coordinator and Case Manager, Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)

<sup>34</sup> Ruth Kanatser, Harm Reduction Action Center (2018)

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Dykes, Baltimore Community Mediation Center (2019)

<sup>36</sup> Barbara Allen, James' Place, facilitator of grief support groups, bereaved parent and sibling (2019)

If you are working with [families and friends](#) of people who use drugs:<sup>37</sup>

- Focus on empowerment that can come from helping reduce harm for their loved ones (e.g. teaching about naloxone use, medication-assisted treatment).
- Know that many family members and friends may support abstinence and 'tough love' approaches before they understand harm reduction.
- Working to disrupt "bad" info can be challenging and take a lot of time. Don't spend all your energy there, but consider what could be very harmful if undisrupted.
- There is often a mix of love, care, fear, and a desire to support.

We deeply regret not having done more outreach out to facilitators about specific advice regarding groups for sex workers or groups that talk about safety, harm reduction, and sex. We found Jacqui Robarge, founder and director of Power Inside, immeasurably helpful--but we did not ask her this question specifically.

**Sometimes, Things Go Wrong:** Though we all aspire to never make any mistakes or missteps, that's never going to be our reality. Regrets (see above!) are inevitable. Conflict and tensions can arise and flare; you might get pushback from a group member for an activity you planned; you might say something harmful; and so on. Planning 'what ifs' before you facilitate might help alleviate some worries and give you time to plan a response. Debriefing can help you to reflect and plan next steps.

Whether you planned a particular 'what if' or not, you will need to handle things that go awry. Doing this changes based on the situation, such as whether you address what happened in the moment or at the next meeting, whether the group takes a break or ends early, or whether you take a break from facilitation and bring someone else into the role.

Know your skills to handle conflict. It can be hard to figure out whether a situation has surpassed your ability to mediate. When unsure what to do next, grounding/breathing activities or taking a break can be effective for calming tensions.

Additionally, feedback from the group can be incredibly helpful to learn where you can strengthen your own facilitation. Be open to different kinds of feedback that people may offer, whether by talking to you in person, sending you an email, calling you to talk, or writing it down.

Lastly, when things do not go as planned, it can be hard to work past negative self-talk and replaying what happened. Take time to breathe, take care of yourself, and re-energize in the ways you need to, whether that involves doing a mindless activity, going for a walk, spending time alone, or debriefing with someone you trust.

## *Group Agreements*

Group agreements, also described as 'community agreements,' 'group norms,' 'group expectations,' etc. can be an important facilitation tool. They can clarify expectations of participants and facilitators.

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<sup>37</sup> Ruth Kanatser, with Harm Reduction Action Center (2018)

*In my work with Baltimore Racial Justice Action, I have found that group agreements can become 'weaponized' against participants sitting with their own discomfort--particularly white participants will do this against their own learning and often against people of color, if it's a mixed setting. Group agreements do not replace facilitation. Agreements do not get to be used against learning or growth.*

*I tend to not do a whole lot with group agreements anymore. Sometimes, I will instead present my assumptions--largely from BRJA--for the group. For instance, I share that I assume that you cannot grow without some level of discomfort. Discomfort's role in growth will vary between people and only the participant can know, but I expect some amount of discomfort in that learning space.*

*That said, other facilitators swear by group agreements and do amazing things with them. If it helps you, go for it!*

Harriet Smith

Coming up with group agreements has been relatively popular amongst facilitators we've talked to and in groups we've been a part of. Often, this can help with trust-building between group members. Setting agreements and expectations is meant to be an honest process in which group members share what they need to feel present and participatory. Though this activity usually takes place in the first meeting, many facilitators suggest posting the agreements in a visible spot around the room (e.g. on a piece of chart paper) and establishing that it is a living document—one which can be added to or edited in the future, as the group requests.

It's important to note here that creating group agreements is not necessarily about rule creation nor policing behavior—instead it is about creating a space for everyone in the group to participate and have an initial discussion about accountability for when the space is no longer available or responsible to everyone.

Because group agreements are created by the group itself, holding each other to those expectations should also come from within the group. You can ask “When this happens, how will we deal with it?” to plant the initial seeds of group members holding one another accountable, instead of you as the facilitator taking on that role in every moment.<sup>38</sup> Give it time; it may take time for everyone time to adjust.<sup>39</sup>

Every facilitator that we spoke with offered their own favorite group agreements, as well as suggestions for how they might function. We have included a few below and a larger list is in the Appendix.

These are a place to start thinking about this tool--we hope that within your group, there will be a tailored approach depending on the needs, culture, tone, and purpose of the group sessions.

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<sup>38</sup> Daniel Dykes, Baltimore Community Mediation Center (2019)

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, AA participant (2019)

- ❑ Make space, take space // Move up, move up<sup>40</sup> (Everyone should be thoughtful about how much 'airtime' they take up within the room/group, and remember to be engaged through listening.)
- ❑ One Mic<sup>41</sup> // One Voice<sup>42</sup> (One person should be speaking at a time.)
- ❑ It's okay to "pass"<sup>43</sup> (Feel free to "pass" if you do not want to share or respond to a particular question.)
- ❑ Maintain Confidentiality // What's said here (names and details) stays here, what's learned here (lessons, suggestions, ideas) should go with you<sup>44</sup>
- ❑ Use content warnings<sup>45</sup> (If sharing particular stories that may be triggering to someone else in the group, use a term like 'content warning' to allow people a heads up and a chance to remove themselves, if desired.)

## Mechanisms & Strategies for Group Discussion

When you are planning facilitation, keep routine in mind. For example, having a set check-in and close-out for each meeting offers stability, even when other topics or activities change day-by-day. There are suggestions for check-in questions in the Appendix.

Some other elements of routine that you can incorporate include grounding, using a talking item, and doing a close-out. Grounding can be particularly important for bringing everyone into the space physically, emotionally, and mentally. Two go-to grounding techniques, shared by sam kerr from Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition, are having everyone take a deep breath, and putting your hand up when you notice someone else's hand going up.

Using a talking item that can be passed around to the speaker, like a stuffed animal,<sup>46</sup> can establish that only one person is talking at a time.

For closing out a group, many facilitators like to offer time to reflect for anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes. This can be non-verbal, especially if the group has been talking for a long period of time, or it can be verbal. Options include sharing gratitude and reflections, taking time for silent meditation, or having a discussion oriented around next steps.

**There are countless ways to have discussion within a group setting:** What options you choose can depend on what materials you have available, how much time you have, and what your group finds most helpful. Some of our favorites are: going around in a circle to have each person share, talking in small pairs and then sharing out with the larger group, having each person call on someone they do not know to share next, asking people to write their questions/thoughts on index cards before handing them in to you, and writing on post-it notes that can be posted on charts or around room.

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<sup>40</sup> AORTA, [Anti-Oppressive Facilitation for Democratic Process: Making Meetings Awesome For Everyone](#)

<sup>41</sup> Christine Rodriguez, with Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore (2019)

<sup>42</sup> sam kerr, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition

<sup>43</sup> Ian Beam, youth leader with Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)

<sup>44</sup> Something to this effect is used in most groups we've been participants in and that we have facilitated.

<sup>45</sup> sam kerr, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (2019)

<sup>46</sup> Chey, member of Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)

We have also gathered a few tips for handling specific scenarios that may come up while you facilitate discussion. Groups will always have varied dynamics, including times when everyone is quiet, when there are one or two “talkers” overwhelming the discussion, or when everyone seems to be unfocused or not present.

**For quieter groups:**

- Try calling on people randomly. Make sure to not force vulnerability or disclosure.<sup>47</sup>
- Try checking-in with the group, such as going around and sharing one thing that this conversation brings to mind.
- Bring in movement (with your group's physical space and participant needs in mind); see the Movement-Based Activities in Appendix.
- Incorporate non-verbal tactics, such as raising your hand (or keeping your hand down) as a way to answer questions.

**Working with “talkers”:**

- Ask the person to share one more sentence before you all move on, or tell them you can come back to what they're sharing at the very end.<sup>48</sup>
- Sharing often can be a sign of interest in more leadership. You could potentially talk to them about wanting to facilitate a group meeting in the future.<sup>49</sup>
- Ask group members to write down what they want to say on index cards, post-its, or on their own sheet of paper.
- Have a timer set (or a general expectation) of how long each person has to share.
- After you pose a prompt, ask everyone to wait 30 seconds before anyone comments.<sup>50</sup>

**For when people are not feeling present:**

- Sharing uplifting stories, whether related to the topic at hand or just uplifting in general, can be refreshing.<sup>51</sup>
- Spend some time sharing about self-care practices and daily rituals.<sup>52</sup>
- Try a lighthearted or funny topic.
- Movement exercises, drawing, journalling, taking a break, and checking in (all discussed briefly above).

*Looking for Activities?*

We know that support groups are not just for group discussion. Facilitation includes a wide variety of activities, and having a number of different activities that get at a similar concept helps to encourage deeper learning. For example, a conversation about safer drug use can be

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<sup>47</sup> Brittaney Caron, therapist, Toronto, Canada (2019)

<sup>48</sup> Barbara Allen, James' Place, longtime facilitator for grief support groups, bereaved parent and sibling (2019)

<sup>49</sup> Nick Brooks, Workforce Development Coordinator, Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)

<sup>50</sup> Mariah Guarnaccia, Harm Reduction Coordinator & Case Manager, Youth Empowered Society (YES) (2019)

<sup>51</sup> sam kerr, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (2019)

<sup>52</sup> Rajani Gudlavalleti, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition and facilitator with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (2019)

followed by using props or related equipment to demonstrate what safer drug use can look like.<sup>53</sup> You could follow that by asking for ways that participants would message the safer use strategies to a friend. Also, experiencing joy and having fun are just as important as straightforward discussion.

**Suggestions for Activity Planning:** Be sure to keep accessibility and your group members in mind if you are planning specific activities. Think about your group's ability and levels of comfort with physical movement, writing/reading, any materials you're using, language, and sharing in front of the group. It may be helpful to talk to participants and mentors before you plan any experiential activities to ensure the activity is appropriate.<sup>54</sup> In that same conversation, you could ask for suggestions or ideas from group members about what they might enjoy doing.

We have included a variety of activities to start off your brainstorming and planning. For each of the activities in this section, feel free to adapt them to fit your group as it makes sense. For example, if you want to use a roleplaying exercise, we welcome you to choose a topic that fits your group best. In some cases, there is more detail and more activity suggestions in the Appendix.

### Quiet Activities<sup>55</sup>

- Do silent stretches, either as a group or individually.
- Walk or move around (at various speeds) (with those who are able). People can be prompted to move around slowly, backwards, fast, silently, in a line, etc.
- Ask each person to look around the room and find 5 things they have not noticed before.
- Draw a picture of how you are feeling today and share it with the group.
- Have each person journal for five minutes.

#### *EXAMPLE: Writing a Letter to Yourself<sup>56</sup>*

- *Give everyone time to think and write a letter to their future selves, past selves or themselves in the present. Writing prompts can include offering advice or lessons learned, hopes, and so on to yourself, or an imagined person who is similar.*
- *Once the letters are written, have everyone write their name on the front of the envelope. Collect the envelopes and explain that they will be revisited or given back at a later time (can also be something participants keep).*

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<sup>53</sup> Ruth Kanatser, Harm Reduction Action Center (2019)

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Dykes, Baltimore Community Mediation Center (2019)

<sup>55</sup> Most of these are from Harriet. Some are from her experiences participating in groups with Baltimore-based, Theatre Action Group (TAG).

<sup>56</sup> Seeds for Change, [Facilitation tools for meetings and workshops](#) **AND** others, including Jacqui Robarge, founder and director with Power Inside (2019)

## Dreaming Activities / Planning or visioning Institution of the Future<sup>57</sup>

**EXAMPLE:** *Writing a Letter to Yourself*<sup>58</sup>

With the group, imagine a \_\_\_\_ institution of the future. Examples: healthcare/hospital, drug treatment facility, school.

- What would the best possible version of it look like?
  - Location, Services offered, Decision-making and input processes, Staffing/labor of the system or institution, Physical layout or design, etc.
- The goal is to spark creativity by imagining something better/different, something dreamy.

## Practicing Activities (aka Role Play)

**EXAMPLE:** *Improv or Role Play as Yourself*

- This is an effective tool for practicing new skills or using existing skills in new situations.
- Select a situation to be played out.
  - Ask yourself and the group what you want to examine and why.
  - Keep the situation simple as possible.
- Explain the situation fully, including any groups represented and the physical layout.
- Stop the simulation once conversation comes to a natural end, people want to stop, or if a participant becomes tense/too involved.
- After ending the role play, debrief:
  - How did you feel in this scenario?
  - What did the observers (people not acting in the simulation) notice?
  - What was learned, and how might these insights apply to real life?

## Visual Art Activities

- Create a body sculpture or tell a story with body movement (no words!) (can be done by one's self or with others)<sup>59</sup>
- Make a self portrait a portrait of the group (can guide people away from being realistic)
- Draw your feelings in reaction to a prompt
- Dance! For fun! (Musical chairs! Musical red-light, green-light!)

## Oral Histories and Storytelling<sup>60</sup>

- Share what the story of your name is
- Share the story of your day today (using lots of descriptive words)

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<sup>57</sup> Harriet came up with this in her early years of facilitating with BRJA. She's found it particularly helpful with groups after they've explored how horrible various systems and institutions are. Dreaming is an important aspect of creating change and seeking justice!

<sup>58</sup> Seeds for Change, [Facilitation tools for meetings and workshops](#) AND others, including Jacqui Robarge, founder and director with Power Inside (2019)

<sup>59</sup> Harriet sharing experience as participant in Baltimore-based, Theatre Action Group (TAG) workshops.

<sup>60</sup> National Gender & Equity Campaign, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), [Facilitation guide for community engagement](#). Adapted from the "Oral History Guide" by the National Japanese American Historical Society, 1993.



## Weighing in, Opinion-sharing

### **EXAMPLE:** Spectrum Exercise

- This is a useful tool for exploring different views and needs around an issue or topic
- Create a real or imaginary line across the room. Real lines can be created using masking tape.
  - One end of the line is the opposite of the other end.
- Prepare a list of statements that could have two very different answers (yes or no questions, agree or disagree statements, etc.)
- Read out each question/statement by question and ask people to position themselves along the line based on their views, feelings, etc.
- Ask a few people to explain why they chose their particular spot before moving on to the next.
- You can debrief with the group at the end. Possible debrief questions include:
  - Did the group's response surprise you at any point?
  - What question were you unsure about?
  - What did you notice most about this activity?

## Last Activity Ideas<sup>61</sup>

- Listen to a piece of music and reflect on how it brings up emotions or memories.
- Go through a slideshow of photos related to a particular topic and talk in small groups about the perspective shown, their meaning, their historical importance, etc.<sup>62</sup>
- Go to an art museum or other interactive environment.
- Clean up the area near your meeting space; pick up trash, fix small things, re-paint, etc.
- Practice a hands-on activity that can be methodical and therapeutic. Examples: knitting, crocheting, beading, putting lotion on one's own hands, making naloxone kits, etc.
- Pot plants with the group. If plants are allowed to be left in the meeting space, encourage group members to take care of their plants each week.
- Mend clothes (whether clothes of group members or people close to them) as a mindful practice.

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<sup>61</sup> Shared by Harriet, with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition

<sup>62</sup> Adapted from an activity Harriet participated in led by other Baltimore Racial Justice Action facilitators.

**Attribution and credit:** A majority of this section was compiled from what the authors have been taught and experienced over the years. We'd like to specifically acknowledge the following people and groups that we've learned a lot from:

- Elders and mentors at Baltimore Racial Justice Action (Avis, Adar, Dotty, Dianne, Erica)
- Willie Bryant, with Bmore POWER
- Jacqui Robarge and all the women with Power Inside
- Christine Rodriguez, with Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore
- Facilitators and members of Youth Empowered Society (YES)
- Ruth Kanatser, with Harm Reduction Action Center
- Daniel Dykes, with Baltimore Mediation Center
- The members and facilitators of Theatre Action Group (TAG)
- Brittaney Caron, therapist in Toronto, Canada
- Barbara Allen, James' Place, longtime facilitator for grief support groups, bereaved parent and sibling (2019)
- sam kerr and Rajani Gudlavaletti with Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition

**Additional Resources for this Section:**

- AORTA: [Anti-Oppressive Facilitation for Democratic Process: Making Meetings Awesome For Everyone](#)
- [Circle Forward](#) by Kay Pranis: [Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence](#)
- Drug Policy Alliance: [The Real Reasons Teens Use Drugs](#)
- [Extreme Facilitation](#) by Suzanne Ghais
- [Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators](#), workbook by Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan
- National Gender & Equity Campaign, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP): [Facilitation guide for community engagement](#)
- [Over the Influence: The Harm Reduction Guide to Controlling Your Alcohol and Drug Use](#) by Patt Denning and Jeannie Little
- Seeds for Change: [Facilitation tools for meetings and workshops](#)

## Additional Resources

We are continually appreciative of the endless amount of creative and necessary work being done in Maryland and across the country regarding harm reduction, support groups, and facilitation more broadly.

Below is a list of additional resources, some of which have been referenced in this guide already. It includes organizations, publications, websites, and other mediums that may be helpful to you as a facilitator. Resources that include websites or free pdfs are linked below and can be clicked on.

Please note that this list is not comprehensive; instead, we hope this serves as a starting point for more research, personal discovery, and fruitful conversation.

### *Maryland-based Organizations*

- [Baltimore Community Mediation Center](#)
- [Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition](#)
- [Bmore POWER](#)
- [BRIDGES Coalition](#)
- [Community Transformation](#)
- [Healthcare for the Homeless Maryland](#)
- [Maryland Harm Reduction Training Institute/Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland](#)
- [Power Inside](#)
- [Restorative Response Baltimore](#)
- [Sex Worker Outreach Project, Baltimore](#)
- [SPARC Women's Center \(a project of JHSPH\)](#)

### *Organizations: Outside of Maryland, National, & Beyond*

- [AIDS United](#)
- [Chicago Recovery Alliance](#)
- [Drug Policy Alliance](#)
- [Global Network of Sex Work Projects](#)
- [Harm Reduction Action Center](#)
- [Harm Reduction Coalition](#)
- [Harm Reduction International](#)
- [HIPS](#)
- [International Network of People Who Use Drugs](#)
- [Magenta](#)
- [National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors - Drug User Health Program](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [Open Society Foundations](#)
- [Positive Women's Network](#)
- [Sex Worker Outreach Project, USA](#)

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