



Youth Research Training Manual



Sarasota Prevention Research
Center
Sarasota County Health Department



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The Florida Prevention Research Center at the University of South Florida
13201 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC 56, Tampa, FL 33612
(813) 971-2119

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| TOPIC | PAGE # |
|--|--------|
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| How to Use This Guide..... | 5 |
| Project Overview..... | 6 |
| Interview Skills..... | 11 |
| Preparation and Set-up for focus groups and interviews.... | 13 |
| Establishing Trust and Developing Rapport..... | 15 |
| Assuring Confidentiality/Parental Consent..... | 15 |
| Ethics of Interviewing..... | 17 |
| The importance of non-biased response..... | 17 |
| Listening Skills..... | 21 |
| Dealing with questions and voiced misperceptions..... | 23 |
| Probing Skills..... | 23 |
| Tape Recording and Note Taking..... | 27 |
| Closing the interview/focus group..... | 31 |
| Reviewing the Interview/focus group..... | 31 |
| Focus Group Skills..... | 33 |
| How to Use a Moderator's Guide..... | 33 |
| Becoming familiar with the moderator's guide..... | 33 |
| Becoming familiar with the objectives of the guide..... | 35 |
| Introducing yourself and making the group feel Comfortable..... | 35 |
| Facilitating discussions..... | 37 |
| Dealing with Personalities..... | 39 |
| Encountering Difficult Situations..... | 42 |
| Reviewing/critiquing a video-taped focus group..... | 47 |
| Conducting Your Own Focus Group..... | 47 |
| Appendixes..... | 53 |
| Preparation Checklist | 54 |
| Sample Parental Consent Form | 55 |
| Sample Interviewer's Guide | 58 |
| Sample Focus Group Moderator's Guide | 59 |

Introduction

Congratulations! You have just taken the first step on a new adventure- becoming a focus group moderator and personal interviewer! You already have the basics of what it takes to do a great job- you are intelligent, you are confident, and you are a strong thinker. You like to talk with people about what interests them, you are curious about what others have to say, and you are a good listener. It is our job to take those basic characteristics that would make you good and teach you some skills that will make you great! It is important to remember these things:

- ☺ No one is “born” a great moderator or interviewer. The more you do, the better you become!
- ☺ No session is perfect. Don't beat yourself up for your mistakes- learn from them!
- ☺ Appreciate personalities. Every person is very different and has something about them to appreciate. Respect and enjoy people's differences- it's what makes this kind of information gathering so interesting.
- ☺ Have fun! Sometimes we get so wrapped up in collecting the information that we forget this is supposed to be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved. When you are able to balance both, a great time can be had by all!



How to Use This Guide

This guide was created for use with the Florida Prevention Research Center Sarasota Youth 1999 Training. The guide includes three main sections:

- ☞ Project Overview
- ☞ Interviewing Skills
- ☞ Focus Group Moderation Skills

Within each section listed above, there are skills that are very important for beginning moderators and interviewers. These skills will be taught in the training. There are also activities that have been developed to reinforce the training material. These activities include Discussion Questions and Exercises.

The purpose of the Discussion Questions is to clarify why we use some of the methods that we use. It is our hope that by relating these activities to everyday situations, we can better understand and use them.

The purpose of the Exercises is to reinforce the lessons learned by applying them. Many of the exercises can be conducted in a natural setting so that learning and applying the skills becomes a part of every day life.

We suggest that you first use this guide in conjunction with the training. Once you have completed the training, try the exercises. Doing the exercises will assist you in practicing what you have learned. In addition to doing the exercises, you should review this guide to remind yourself of the many skills and helpful hints learned in training.

Review this guide:

- ➔ When you are about to do your first focus group or interview;
- ➔ After your first focus group and interview to remind yourself of what improvements you can make in the future, and;
- ➔ At any point at which you feel you may need a refresher!

Have fun!

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This section is designed to answer questions you may have about who we are, what our project is all about and what role you will play in its success!

Who are we?

We represent a group of individuals from the Florida Prevention Research Center at the University of South Florida and the Sarasota Prevention Research Center.

What is this project is all about?

We are working very closely with the Sarasota community to try and prevent cigarette smoking and alcohol use in youth in Sarasota County. We hope to prevent these problems by creating a marketing campaign focused on Sarasota county youth and their parents. To develop this marketing campaign we must first talk with the youth. We talk with the youth through personal interviews and focus groups.

Who will we be talking with?

We will be talking with Sarasota County youth in grades 5 through 8. These youth will come from a number of local agencies such as the Boys and Girls clubs, YMCA, CYD, Sarasota Parks and Recreation Centers and Girls, Inc., just to name a few. The youth have agreed to participate and their parents have given permission for them to be a part of the group or interview.

What are we looking for in these focus groups and interviews?

We are looking for several things. First, we want to find out what makes these youth behave the way they do. For example, what makes youth smoke? Is it peer pressure? Is it advertising? Once we know what makes youth smoke, we can focus on that in our campaign. After we determine what makes youth behave a certain way, we need to find out if those behaviors are different for different types of youth. For example, do all youth smoke

because of peer pressure or is it only younger youth? We do not want to focus on peer pressure as a factor in 8th graders, if it is only a factor in 5th graders.

Why was I selected to help lead these focus groups and interviews?

The only way to get the youth to talk about smoking and tobacco is if they trust and look up to the person asking the questions. The youth are more likely to trust and look up to you, a younger adult, than a much older adult. You play a key role here for the University of South Florida and your Sarasota community, because without you, we cannot do this project.

What's in this for me?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS IN THIS FOR YOU?

- 👍 You get paid training and summer employment
- 👍 You can gain valuable experience and leadership skills that can help you when applying to colleges, for scholarships or looking for a good job
- 👍 Teaches you to be a great listener and facilitator
- 👍 You will meet new people and have fun working as a team
- 👍 You will help give youth in the community a voice
- 👍 Provides an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of kids in your community
- 👍 You could play a role in preventing smoking and alcohol use and related illness and death in your county
- 👍 You will be contributing to scientific research at the University

What are focus groups?

DISCUSSION QUESTION: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A FOCUS GROUP BEFORE? WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

A focus group is like a discussion group. Focus groups are held to get information about a certain subject. A focus group usually includes about 6

to 10 people, called participants or members. It also includes one moderator. A moderator is a person that asks the group questions in order to get the information that is needed. The focus group may also include a co-moderator and/ or an observer.

What are personal, in-depth interviews?

Personal, in depth interviews are another way of getting information about a subject from people. Personal, in depth interviews are what we call "one-on-one" ways of collecting this information. One-on-one means that one person asks the questions (the interviewer) and one person gives the answers (the interviewee or respondent.)

If personal, in depth interviews and focus groups are both used to get information, why don't you use just pick one instead of using both?

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

THINK ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU WANTED TO GET INFORMATION. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY REASONS YOU WOULD WANT TO ASK A GROUP OF FRIENDS INSTEAD OF ONE FRIEND? CAN YOU THINK OF ANY REASONS THAT YOU WOULD WANT TO ASK ONE FRIEND INSTEAD OF A WHOLE GROUP?

Depending on the type of information we need, we may want to ask a group or we may want to ask an individual. Both types have their advantages:

Personal, in depth interviews are:

- † Used for complicated information
- † Used when you need to understand individual decisions
- † Used with very sensitive subjects
- † Used with hard to reach people
- † Used when topics are strongly influenced by peer pressure
- † Easier to set up than focus groups
- † Cheaper than focus groups
- † Used when you need more detailed information

Focus groups:

- 👥 Help us understand the language and motivations of groups of people
- 👥 Are used to test messages before they are released to the public
- 👥 Are used to encourage discussion
- 👥 Are used to let us observe how people are influenced by others
- 👥 Require a relatively small number of people
- 👥 Are less threatening to some people than personal interviews
- 👥 Generate a wide range of answers and discussion
- 👥 Allow us to conduct several groups at a time in a short time frame

💡 *Disadvantages of focus groups: they are very dependent on the skill of the moderator. The solution: great moderator training!*

What information will we be trying to get from these focus groups and interviews?

As we mentioned a little bit earlier, we are hoping to get information about what contributes to youth starting smoking or drinking. We are also looking for information about why certain youth do not drink or smoke.

What will happen to this information once we collect it?

Your notes and tapes from each session will be typed up (transcribed) and analyzed by researchers at the University of South Florida. We will then take the most important pieces of information and put them in a survey. This survey will be sent to hundreds of youth in Sarasota County in the fall.

What do you do with the information you get from the fall survey?

We use it to develop a marketing campaign to try and prevent youth in Sarasota from smoking.

This seems like an important job that I have taken on. Will there be someone there that can help me if I need it?

Of course! We mentioned earlier that focus groups have one moderator, one co-moderator and one observer. When you are the moderator, you will have a co-moderator that can assist with the tape recorder and take notes. You will also have an observer. The observers are your Team Leaders. They are University of South Florida graduate students that have been trained in focus groups and personal interviews. They are there to observe, take notes, support you and assist you in case of any challenging or interesting situations.

Any questions? Now is the time to ask!



INTERVIEWING SKILLS

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

LET'S SAY YOU ARE AN INTERVIEWER. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE SKILLS YOU MUST HAVE TO GET THE INFORMATION YOU NEED? WHAT TRAITS SHOULD NEVER BE DEMONSTRATED?

There are 10 main skill areas that every great interviewer needs to know:

- ◆ Preparation and set-up: know your guide and equipment, introduce yourself
- ◆ Establish trust and rapport
- ◆ Assure confidentiality and parental consent
- ◆ Be an ethical interviewer
- ◆ Don't unintentionally encourage biased responses – watch your verbal and non-verbal cues
- ◆ Use good listening skills
- ◆ Deal with "voiced misperceptions" appropriately
- ◆ Use probing skills to get more information
- ◆ Tape record and take good notes
- ◆ Close the interview- ask for final input, say thanks and check your notes and tapes!

We will review each skill in a little more detail in the sections that follow, but first let's observe a mock interview so that you can see how it is supposed to be done!

EXERCISE #1:

Watch the mock interview and see how many of the interviewing skills above that you spot!



NOTES



First things first- Preparation and Set-up for focus groups and interviews

These are some helpful hints to get you going before your focus group or interview even starts! We have some of the equipment here that we will pass around so that you can familiarize yourselves with it.

What to do:

- ◆ Go over your checklist before and after the group to make sure you did not forget anything. We have developed a checklist that you can customize and use (Check the Appendix).
- ◆ Make sure you have all of your supplies and equipment in order.
- ◆ Make sure you have tested all of your equipment.
 - ◆ Place the tape recorder in an easy to access location, where it is not in the way.
 - ◆ Practice hooking the tape recorders to the microphones.
 - ◆ Sit in each chair and speak in a soft tone while recording, then play back. Make sure the tape can pick up people in each seat.
 - ◆ Practice labeling and changing tapes. Label both tapes on both sides BEFORE the group begins. Put the first tape in on the first side and place the other next to the recorder. This makes it less likely (but not impossible) to tape over the first tape.
- ◆ Be completely familiar with the guide and the project goals.
- ◆ Introduce yourself, look the person or people in the eye and smile.
- ◆ Show people where to sit.
- ◆ Make sure there are no barriers between you and the other person(s.)
- ◆ Make sure everyone is physically and socially comfortable.
- ◆ Sit where you have an ability to take notes and watch everyone's non-verbal cues.

EXERCISE #2: Review your interview or focus group guide several times before your first real interview or focus group. Practice several times on family members, friends or groups of friends to become as familiar as you can.

EXERCISE #3: Arrive at your interview or focus group 1-hour early. Take time to review your checklist and check your equipment and tapes.

NOTES



Establishing Trust and Developing Rapport

In order to get the information you need, the people must trust you and feel comfortable with you. Here are some hints that will help you do that:

What to do :

- ◆ Introduce yourself, then the others, by first name only.
- ◆ Memorize your introduction and questions so you don't have to read them.
- ◆ Be polite, but firm.
- Don't talk down.
- Talk in a natural, conversational tone.
- Focus on conversation, not interrogation.
- Don't put physical barriers between you.
- Watch your body language, use of hands, expressions and choice of clothing/ style.

Assuring Confidentiality/ Parental Consent

Confidentiality

It is extremely important that any information you hear is not shared with anyone outside of the group, other than the researchers from USF and Sarasota. One way of creating trust is assuring the people you speak with that their responses are confidential. You should also tell them that they should only use first names in the group, and that their responses will be combined with what everyone else says so that no one person is identified. When the report is read, it will not say anything about them individually. Finally, you must tell the individuals that if they are uncomfortable and want to stop the interview or leave the focus group for any reason, they can do so at any time.

Parental Consent

Every youth that is in your focus group or that you are interviewing **MUST** have **written** permission from their parent to be there. This is extremely important to remember. If any youth do not have permission, in the form of

NOTES



a standard parental consent form, then they cannot participate. This includes youth that come into the group late. You may want to designate your co-moderator or USF observer as the person that checks parental consent forms. Kindly explain to the youth that we do not have a permission slip for them, and that until we do, we cannot include them in the group. We can include them in a different group or interview once they have turned their form in. We will give you extra parental consent forms to provide to those youth that do not have them. Be sure to give the name of the youth to the USF observer so that they are not included in the list of those that attended the group.

Ethics of Interviewing

Because you will be talking with youth under the age of 18 about confidential, sometimes sensitive, information there are ethical issues that must be taken into consideration. We already discussed confidentiality and the importance of it above. That is critical. We also talked about parental consent and that no youth can participate without it. Another ethical consideration is called fairness. This means that you must treat all members of the group fairly and equally, with respect and free from discrimination.

The importance of non-biased response

DISCUSSION QUESTION:
WHAT IS A BIASED RESPONSE?
WHY IS A NON-BIASED RESPONSE IMPORTANT?

If you are a good interviewer or moderator, then your individuals may look up to you. If you are not careful, you could sway their answers one way or another just by the way you respond to them. This response could be verbal (what you say) or non-verbal (the way you look at them or act toward them.) Here are some helpful hints you can use so that you do not sway their answers in any way:

- 1) Don't express your opinion either verbally or physically
- 2) Don't tell too much about yourself (disclosure)
- 3) When facilitating do not lead the respondents in a certain direction

NOTES



Sometimes we ask leading questions without even realizing it! Below are some examples of questions that might lead or cause bias (asked the incorrect way) and questions that don't (asked the correct way.) All it involves is just saying something a little bit differently.

Example #1:

👉 The incorrect way-

"John, when you see someone smoking, do you think it makes him or her look cool?"

👉 The correct way-

"John, when you see someone smoking, what do you think about that person?"

Example #2:

👉 The incorrect way-

"So what you are trying to say is that you like to smoke, right?"

👉 The correct way-

"You just made a comment about how you feel about smoking. Can you explain that a little bit more, please?"



NOTES



Listening Skills

One of the most important parts of being a great moderator or interviewer is having great listening skills. You mentioned some of them earlier in this section. You also mentioned some things a good listener would not do.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:
DO YOU KNOW WHEN SOMEONE IS AND IS NOT LISTENING TO YOU?
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL WHEN YOU KNOW SOMEONE IS OR IS NOT LISTENING TO YOU?

Here are some helpful hints to make sure that you are a good listener and get the best information possible:

- 👂 It's important not to talk but to listen and facilitate- don't make unnecessary comments
- 👂 Listen with interest to encourage respondents to continue talking, but not conveying approval or disapproval (be careful of using positive expressions or head nodding too much. Participants may see this as a sign of approval [or lack of approval] of their responses.) use:
 - 👂 "uh-huh"
 - 👂 "I see"
 - 👂 "I understand"
- 👂 Do not be judgmental
- 👂 Respond to body language and non-verbal cues
- 👂 Handle distractions by keeping the focus and re-directing when necessary:
 - ➔ "let's move on"
 - ➔ "To the next question"
 - ➔ "That brings up a related issue..."
 - ➔ "We only have a little time left so..."
 - ➔ "Let me ask that we hold this discussion for a moment so that I can ask..."

NOTES



Ask yourself these questions:

- ? What else do I need to ask to understand what this person means?
- ? Am I hearing everything I need to know to understand the answer to the research question?
- ? How much time do I have left?
- ? How can I get to their feelings?

EXERCISE #4: Try some of these helpful hints in your everyday life, with your friends, classmates, siblings and parents. Try to imagine that they are your focus group or interview and that your goal is to get information from them. Start with a topic and ask questions related to the topic. See if you can use your new listening skills to get the information that you are interested in!

Dealing with questions and voiced misperceptions

We all know what questions are. Voiced misperceptions are statements that people make that are incorrect or that we think are incorrect. There are two occasions when these may occur:

Questions may occur when individuals see you as an expert when it comes to the subject you are discussing. They may ask you questions during the group or interview related to that subject. If you answer their questions, this may affect their and other's responses for the remainder of the group or interview. It is best to wait until after the group is over to answer the questions. Reassure the individual that their question is important and that you will be sure to answer it once the interview/ focus group is complete.

Voiced misperceptions may cause problems when a participant comments on something that you think or know to be false. You may be tempted to correct them, but don't. If you are sure that the information is incorrect, wait until after the group or interview is over to diplomatically clarify the statement.

Probing Skills

Probing is a very important tool that all good focus group moderators and interviewers must be familiar with and learn how to use. Probing is a way of

NOTES



getting additional information from the individual without leading them in a certain direction. There are a number of different occasions when we want to use probing:

- When individuals give limited information and you need to follow-up:

"I think a lot about smoking and drinking. I don't like them but I do it anyway"

- When the words they use can mean anything – "good, bad, easy, hard", etc.

"It is easy to get cigarettes around here"

- When you are not sure if what they said was an answer or if they were just thinking out loud

"I think that there might be some people that smoke because they like it, but I'm not sure and I think some people might not want to smoke but they do. I think that most people don't like to smoke, but they do anyway. "

There are a number of different types of probes you can use for a number of different occasions. Here are the most common types:

- *Elaborate* – "Tell me a little more about that", or "you started to say something about____, is there anything else?"
- *Exemplify* – "can you give me an example of that?"
- *Explain* – "I am not sure if I got all of that, can you explain it one more time?"
- *Specify* – When a respondent says something that could provide more information – "It makes me afraid" you might respond, "What about it makes you afraid?" or "what do you mean by afraid?", or "what specifically about _____ makes you feel afraid?"

NOTES



- *Pause* – don't be tempted to fill silence. If additional information is needed, pause 4-6 seconds and make eye contact in an attempt to get more information.
- *Questioning* – ask the respondents, " what do you think about_____?"

EXERCISE #4a: While you are trying out your new listening skills, try your hand at probing for information. During your conversations with friends, family, classmates, etc., try your hand at some of the helpful probes above. Get to be familiar with the ones that work best for you and use them in your focus groups and interviews.

Tape Recording and Note taking

Focus groups and interviews are usually tape recorded. In an interview, the interviewer also takes notes. In focus groups, the moderator, co-moderator and observer all take notes.

Tape recording is necessary, because no matter how many people take notes, you could still miss something that is very important, such as key words. Note taking is necessary because a tape recorder cannot catch people's body language, eye contact and other non-verbal cues. Multiple note takers are necessary in focus groups because 1) different people may have different perceptions of non-verbal cues, and 2) you may miss important cues because you are focused on something else that is going on with the group.

Here are some important things to remember when taping the interview or focus group:

Inform people of the presence of the tape recorder, even if it is in an obvious place (don't make too big a deal of this or it will make people nervous!)

Put yourself in a position where you can easily observe and change the tape, but it is not in the way of you or the individual. In focus groups, you may

NOTES



want to ask your co-moderator or observer to be in charge of the tape recorder. This will prevent you from being distracted during the group.

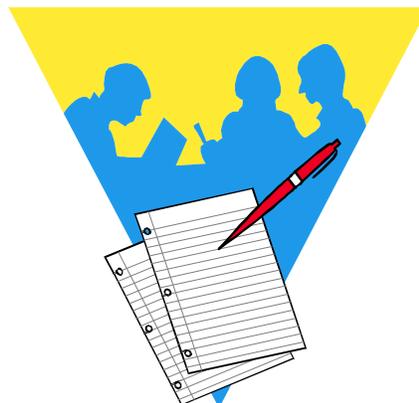
Here are some important things to remember when taking notes in the interview or focus group:

Take good notes but be sure to maintain eye contact. Take notes and try to look at the individual. Look at the individual and try to take notes! This is a balancing act, but with practice you will get the hang of it. Try to balance an equal time of keeping eye contact with taking notes. Pay close attention to the individual to assure them you are listening. When you need to take a note, look down to begin the sentence and look up while you are writing to reassure them to continue talking. After several seconds, look back down again to assure you can read your writing and that it is not off the page. Continue this as long as you can.

Watch that your note taking does not influence people or their responses. For example, in focus groups, if you only take notes when a certain person speaks, that may discourage others from speaking because they may think that what they have to say is not important enough to write down.

Do not assume you know what the individual means. When deciding what to write, be sure that you do not assume what the individual means by summarizing their thoughts or interpreting their thought in your notes.

Be careful in recording answers. Once an interview is over and you move on to the next one, you will forget those subtle pieces of information that came up. For this reason, make sure there are no errors.



NOTES



EXERCISE #5: Select and watch a newscast or group roundtable discussion on television. Try taking notes on what the individual or the group is saying. First, try your skill at taking notes while looking at the television. Once you can do this, work on improving the content of your note taking. Take notes of the discussion for 15 minutes. Once you are done, turn off the TV and look at your notes. Can you read them? Do they convey the message that you heard? If you return to them several days later, will you understand them? Based on your notes, tell another person what you saw. Is it easy for them to understand? Did you leave anything out? Practice this several times until you are comfortable with the level of detail of your notes and feel confident that they are concise, but you did not leave anything important out.

Closing the interview/ focus group

When you have all of the information you need, or if you wish to end the interview or group due to time constraints or other issues, be sure to ask the individuals if they have any additional input and thank them for their time and valuable information.

Reviewing the Interview/ focus group

- ◆ Once the interview/ focus group is complete and everyone has left, be sure to check the quality of the tape recordings. If neither tape is clear and easy to transcribe, you will need to recreate the group using very detailed notes (that is why it is so important to check the equipment beforehand!) If the tapes work well, take a few moments to review your notes and complete them. It is very important that you do this prior to the start of your next interview. If you wait, you will not remember as clearly and groups may begin to merge together!

Now that you have had an opportunity to watch an interview and learn the skills, you can try your hand at interviewing!

EXERCISE #6:

Break up into groups of 2, each with a USF observer. Take turns being the interviewer and the interviewee. The USF observer will give you feedback on your skills.

NOTES



FOCUS GROUP SKILLS

The best way to learn how to conduct a focus group is to watch one in action. We have a brief, mock focus group for you that will show you how to use many of the skills you learned last week. See how many of them you can identify.

As you can see from the focus group, the skills you need for focus groups are many of the same skills that you need for interviewing. Let's briefly review those skills:

- 1) Preparation and set-up: Know your guide and equipment, and introduce yourself
- 2) Establish trust and rapport
- 3) Assure Confidentiality and Parental Consent
- 4) Be an ethical interviewer
- 5) Don't unintentionally encourage biased responses – watch your verbal and non-verbal cues
- 6) Use good listening skills
- 7) Deal with "voiced misperceptions" appropriately
- 8) Use probing skills to get more information
- 9) Tape record and take good notes
- 10) Close the interview- ask for final input, say thanks and check your notes and tapes!

How to Use a Moderator's Guide

The role of a moderator is to facilitate discussion between a group of people in order to get certain information. By facilitate, we mean that they balance listening with making sure the discussion does not get off track, that no one person is dominating the conversation and ensuring that everyone contributes. The moderator's guide helps keep you on track with the questions you will need to ask.

Becoming familiar with the moderator's guide

To be a strong moderator, you must be very familiar with the moderator's guide. Things move pretty quickly in a focus group and you will not have a lot of time to be flipping through pages or trying to understand questions in the guide. If you have any questions at all about the guide, ask any of the USF observers at any point in the project. Remember, though, it is better to get your questions answered before

NOTES



your groups start, rather than wait until you are in the middle of a focus group or interview.

Becoming familiar with the objectives of the guide

We already said that you need to be familiar with the guide. You must also be familiar with the objectives of the guide. What do we mean by this? Knowing the questions and asking them is one thing. Knowing why you are asking those questions is another.

Knowing why you are asking the questions helps you get better information. For example, let's say you have a project for English class. Your teacher tells you to ask your parents where they went to school, but she does not tell you why you need to know. If you go home and ask your parents where they went to school, but you do not know what the information will be used for it makes it much harder to get a good answer. They might say, "I went to school in Florida", or, " I went to school at Riverview High School", or " I went to school in an old red school house", or "I went to a lot of different schools, what do you mean?" If you had known that your teacher was asking because she wanted to determine if any of your parents went to the same college, you could have asked a series of questions that would have given you the exact information you needed.

Introducing yourself and making the group feel comfortable

This can make or break a group. Think about the times that you have been in a group setting where no one knows each other and the group is uncomfortable. It does not exactly make for good conversation, does it? If you have a good introduction prepared, this can make a huge difference in whether your group sits there silently or engages in lots of important discussion.



NOTES



EXERCISE 7: Break into 2 or 3 groups. Take the checklist and develop a focus group introduction.

Introduction Checklist:

- ◆ Welcome
- ◆ Introduce Moderator and Assistant
- ◆ Our topic is...
- ◆ The results will be used for...
- ◆ You were selected because...
- ◆ Guidelines:
 - ◆ There are no wrong answers only differing points of view
 - ◆ We're tape recording, only one person speak at a time
 - ◆ We're on a first name basis
 - ◆ You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views
 - ◆ Turn off your cell phones and pagers. If you cannot, and must respond, please do so quietly and rejoin us as quickly as you can
 - ◆ My role as a moderator will be to guide the discussion
 - ◆ Talk to each other
 - ◆ Have fun!
- ◆ Opening Question

EXERCISE 8:

You can see how developing a good introduction will make you much more comfortable with the material. Try your introduction out on your team members, family and friends before you try it out on your group.

Facilitating discussions

In a personal, in-depth interview, you will only have to deal with one person. In a focus group, you may have to deal with up to 10 people at once. You will have to use what we call "facilitation" skills to make sure the group runs smoothly. You may have several people talking at once, people getting off of the subject, people arguing, people not talking at all, people dominating the conversation, and people who say whatever they think you want them to say. Next, we are going to talk

NOTES



about how to handle all of these events if they should occur. Specifically, we are going to focus on: dealing with personalities and encountering difficult situations.

Dealing with Personalities

DISCUSSION QUESTION:
THINK ABOUT YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PERSONALITIES YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN SPEAKING WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, CLASSMATES, TEACHERS AND STRANGERS?

When you are moderating your focus group you will encounter every personality you could imagine. That's what makes focus groups so interesting. That is also what makes focus groups so challenging! The best way to deal with personalities is to remember that you can't remove them from the discussion. What's more, you don't want to! Our goal is to make sure that those personalities don't affect the information that we collect. You can begin to address the different personalities in the ground rules you set in your introductions. Here are some of the most common types of personalities you could encounter in your focus group, and some ideas on how to handle them:

Tracy Talkative-

I am a very friendly gal with a lot to say! I frequently tend to dominate the conversation!

Tracy is also known as a "dominant" participant. She has lots of great input but if you let her go too far, she can take over the whole group and not give anyone else a chance to talk! Her opinions are very forceful, so she might also sway what some of the other participants say. One way to slow her down and allow others to talk is wait until she breathes and say...

" Thanks Tracy, you've given us a great deal of information. Jeff, why don't you tell us a little bit about what you think on the subject of ____?"

Sometimes you may encounter a dominant participant that somehow miraculously doesn't breathe! If this is the case with your participant, you may have to try the following:

Politely interrupt - "Tracy, thank you, why don't we give some of the other members a chance to tell us what they think."

Tom Tangent

I have so many ideas in my mind that I sometimes have difficulty keeping track! If you have me in your group, you will too!

Tom is a great guy, but he has a little bit of trouble keeping his thoughts on track. Now, everyone needs a little bit of time to get their thoughts together, and the group might need to stray a little bit to explore a subject, BUT- Tom is different. Once he starts going, who knows where he could end up! And to make matters worse, his tangent takes others off the subject too! It is up to you to keep him and the rest of the group focused on the question at hand. If you run into a Tom, you might try this:

"Thanks, Tom, for telling us about your new puppy- why don't we stay a little bit closer to the subject of tobacco? Lisa, what types of people do you think smoke cigarettes?"

Sherry Shy

I don't know why I am in this group! I hate to speak up, so I think I'll just sit and listen to what everyone else has to say.

While Sherry is not disruptive to the group, she may have some excellent things to say, but is not saying them! It's your job to give her every opportunity to give input. You may want to try:

"Sherry, you have not had a chance to speak yet- what do you think about _____?"

Contradicting Connie

I am in a very bad mood today. Because of this I am going to contradict everything that people say.

Connie is usually a nice person, but today she is having a very bad day. If she does this only once or twice, you should just ignore it and move on. However, if she is making a habit out of it that is affecting other participants, it is best to very diplomatically try to shift the focus. Remember never to let a focus group participant get the best of you, and never disrespect them. You can however, try to shift the focus by reminding her of the ground rules:

“We need to remember that there are no right or wrong answers here, and that everyone’s opinion counts. Debbie, why don’t you continue with what you were saying?”

If worst comes to worst, you can always take a quick break and ask to speak with Connie for a moment (outside of the group.) Diplomatically tell her that you can see that today might not be a good day for her to take part in the group. Let her know that you will reschedule a different group for her on a different day, and thank her for her time.

Pleasing Patty

I am terribly in need of people’s approval, so I will most likely agree with whatever other people are saying. I am also very sensitive to the moderator’s comments and body language.

Poor Patty. She has very low self esteem and so she is often influenced by what others say or how they act. If you have a Patty in your group, some additional probes might help elicit her actual feelings:

“Can you tell me a little bit more about that Patty?” or “What do you think about that? Can you explain further?”

Talker/ thinker vs. thinker/ talker

You may have people in your group that talk before they think. It is important to know the difference between their final opinion and just thinking out loud. You may have to give these people a little more time to get their thoughts together, because they may have something very important to say!

Encountering Difficult Situations

In addition to personalities, there are some situations that you may encounter that you will need to know how to handle should they arise. This includes:

- ? What to do if someone you know is in the group
- ? What to do if someone tells personal information that has nothing to do with the discussion
- ? What to do if youth are making "jabs" at other youth
- ? What to do if the group gets out of control
- ? What to do when the group's comments are strongly influenced by other members of the group.

Here are some helpful hints to assist you when a difficult situations arises:

What to do if someone you know is in the group

If the respondent appears the least bit uncomfortable, discreetly ask the individual if they want to leave the group/ interview and make sure that you schedule another group or personal interview (your USF observer or co-moderator can handle this.)

If you are the one that is uncomfortable, you should discreetly tell the USF observer that you know someone in the group and they can assign the co-moderator or themselves to moderate that group.

*NOTE: The USF students are there to assist and support you!
Feel very comfortable talking with them about your concerns or
questions!*

*What to do if someone tells personal information that has nothing to do with
the discussion*

If you are a good moderator and if you have a talkative group with a lot of trust, they may feel as if they can confide in you about things that may or may not have anything to do with the group. In this case, what do you do?

First, are you sure the information has nothing to do with the discussion? You may want to use a probe to make sure. If the topic they bring up is very sensitive, it is best not to make a strong issue of it- attempt to move the group forward. Nod to acknowledge the speakers comment and move on to the next person, using bridges such as " Thank you for sharing that, Jason. Mary, let's talk about_____."

What to do if youth are making "jabs" at other youth

As you did with Contradicting Carol, it is best just to ignore this if it is only a minor occurrence. If it becomes a pattern, however, and it is disrupting the group, you may want to use the same method that you used with Carol. Politely remind the person of the ground rules, and switch the focus to another group member.

What to do if the Group gets out of control

Let's say that your group has just had more than their share of sugar at the snack break, and they are a little bit difficult to handle. There are a number of things you can use to get control of this situation:

- **Redirect and continue**

Try reminding the group of some of the ground rules and focus on the individuals that can't seem to stay focused. By engaging them in the conversation, you may be able to bring their minds back to the subject at hand. Be kind, but be firm.

NOTES



- **Take a snack break and regroup**

If at any time, you are having difficulty with any aspect of the group, take a snack break. At an opportune moment, say to the group, " Let's take a quick, 5 minute snack break" This will give you a chance to take a deep breath, figure out what you want to do and regroup. Consult with your moderator and USF observer for input on how to deal with the situation. By the time the break is over, you are back on track!

- **Take a permanent snack break**

If you take a break and determine that it is not in your best interest, the participants' best interest or the best interest of the research to continue, then end the group. Wait until everyone gets back from the break. Then ask if anyone has any additional input, tell them that you have all the information that you need, and the group is now completed. Thank them for attending and be sure to indicate in your notes why you ended the group.

What to do when the group's comments are strongly influenced by other members of the group.

We already talked about what to do when one person influences another. You try to follow up with the person you think is influenced and ask additional questions. What if it seems as if everyone's opinion is based on what the last person said? There are a number of things you can try to make sure the information you get is good:

- Ask the question in a different way, focusing on the influenced youth first.
- When asking other questions, try to get the most easily influenced youth's opinion first.
- Lay ground rules early on in the group.
- Ensure your co-moderator records body language, etc. to determine if the session will be used.

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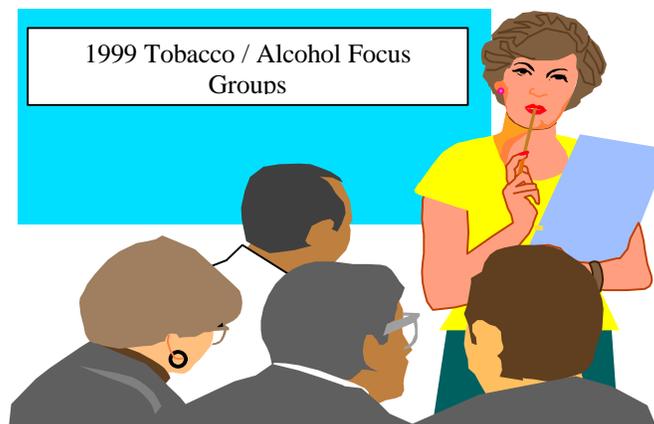
- Try to use projective techniques:
 - “If you had a friend that was a smoker, what would they say about cigarettes?”
 - “If you saw this person on the street, what do you think they would say about cigarettes?”
- Arrange for a personal interview with that individual.
- Ask participants to write their responses down on a piece of paper and then discuss.
- Play “devil’s advocate” – “Now that you have told me what you think about cigarettes, what do you think other people might think about them?”

Reviewing/ critiquing a video-taped focus group

We are now going to give you an opportunity to watch a real focus group. This will let you see what one looks like and let you critique how you think it went. As you watch the group, note down things that went well and not so well, and what you would do differently. When the group is over, we will discuss what you thought.

Conducting Your Own Focus Groups

Now that you have had a chance to watch two focus groups and have learned about all of the skills involved, the best way to learn is to conduct one yourself!



NOTES



EXERCISE #9:

First, assemble around the table. One person is designated as the first moderator. Each person should take turns moderating using this mock moderator's guide. You have not had a chance to properly prepare, but this will give you an idea of how it feels to be in the role of a moderator.

Next, the remaining people should take a slip of paper from this envelope. On it is a type of personality that we learned about today. When one person is moderating, each person will play in the role that they have been assigned.

When the moderator's time is up, everyone should pass their slip of paper to the person at their left and the next person moderates. One USF staff person will evaluate each moderator, and when we are done, we will review the videotape and discuss.

The importance of reviewing what you have learned in this training

This is the end of the formal training session and curriculum. You now have what it takes to be a great focus group moderator and interviewer! As with any new adventure that you embark upon, however, you must continue to review and practice in order to continually improve upon your new skills. You learned a lot in this training, and we would never expect that you would remember it all! Be sure to review this booklet a few more times before and during your time as a USF researcher, especially the sections on focus group skills and interviewing skills. Also, try to incorporate some of the exercises into your everyday routine, like listening skills, probing skills, and facilitating skills. Even if you don't ever conduct focus groups or interviews again, these are life skills that will help you in every situation- from school and socializing to work and interviews!

Congratulations! Now go forth and research!

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APPENDIXES



1999 Summer Youth Research
Preparation Checklist

Before the Interview/ Focus Group:

| | |
|--|--|
| Check Room Set-up | |
| Memorize Introduction | |
| Review Guide and Objectives | |
| Test Tape Recorder | |
| Label Tapes | |
| Have Note Pad and Extra Pens Ready | |
| Test Tape Recorder From Each Seat | |
| Test Microphones | |
| Place Recorder in Easy Access Location | |
| Make Sure Everyone Is Comfortable | |
| Smile and Have Fun! | |

After the Interview/ Focus Group:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Check Tape Quality | |
| Review and Finish Notes | |
| Place Tapes with Notes | |
| Turn in Equipment and Tapes | |
| Congratulate Yourself! | |

Informed Consent Form Youth (under age 18)

Title: Community-Based Prevention Marketing: Building Capacity for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Sarasota Demonstration Project)

Principal Investigator: Robert J. McDermott, University of South Florida

Co-Project Directors: Carol Bryant, Melinda Forthofer, Kelli McCormack Brown, University of South Florida & Susan Calkins, Sarasota County Health Department

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to identify what factors influence adolescent initiation of smoking and alcohol use. Information from this research will help guide the development of community programs to reduce smoking among adolescents. Your child's participation in this study will last for approximately 90 minutes. Approximately 2000 Sarasota county adolescents may be interviewed for this research study.

Procedures: Your child is invited to participate in a focus group with other adolescents their age and/or a personal interview. A focus group is comprised of 8-10 individuals discussing a series of topics under the guidance of a facilitator. Your son or daughter will be asked to talk about their thoughts, beliefs, opinions and attitudes about adolescent smoking, spokespersons for anti-smoking programs for adolescents and different ways of communicating with adolescents about tobacco as well as other related topics. We will record their responses, but we will separate them from any information that could specifically identify them. What we learn from what they say will help in the development of a survey for adolescents and a community program to reduce adolescent smoking and alcohol use. Results will be reported without information that could be used to specifically identify them.

Risks & Benefits: You understand that there are no anticipated risks associated with the study from your child's participation in this study. You understand that the possible benefits in participating in this study are increased knowledge of tobacco use, including risk factors and the knowledge that your opinions will help guide the development of a program for adolescents. The information from this research will be a valuable addition to current knowledge about attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and use of tobacco and alcohol by adolescents.

Confidentiality: The confidentiality of the records shall be maintained unless otherwise required by law. Data with any identifying information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Prevention Research Center's research office. Data stripped of identifiers will be housed in a project office. Results will be reported without the use of specific identifiers. The information from this research will be a valuable addition to current knowledge about attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and use of tobacco by adolescents. Authorized research investigators, agents of the Department and Health and Human Services and/or the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board may inspect your records of this research project.

University of South Florida Injury Statement

In the event that you sustain an injury or illness as a result of participating in this research, please be aware that medical treatment for the injuries or illness may not be available from the University of South Florida (USF). USF does not maintain an emergency medical department nor does it provide medical treatment in all disciplines of medicine. If you become ill or sustain an injury which you believe is related to participation in this research, immediately contact one of the persons listed on page 1 of this form, and if emergency care is needed seek emergency attention from your nearest local hospital.

If injury results from your participation in research, money damages are not automatically available. Money damages are only available to the extent specified in Florida statute, 768.28. A copy of this statute is available upon request to the Division of Compliance Services, USF at (813)631-4498. This statute provides that damages are available only to the extent that negligent conduct of a University employee caused your injuries, and are limited by law. If you believe you are injured as a result of participation in this research and the negligent conduct of a University faculty member, you may notify the USF Self Insurance Programs at (813) 974-8008, who will investigate the matter.

Compensation for Participation: Your child will not be paid for participation in this study.
Volunteering to Be Part of this Research Study: You understand that your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You understand that you may withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty. You also understand that the investigator has the right to remove your child from the study at any time.

OVER ←

Questions and Contacts: If you or your child have any questions about this research study, you may contact Dr. Kelli McCormack Brown at 813-974-6605. If you or your child have any questions about your rights as a person taking part in a research study, you may contact a member of the Division of Compliance Services at the University of South Florida at (813) 631-4498.

Your Consent—By signing this form I agree that:

- I have fully read or have had read and explained to me in my native language this informed consent form describing a research project.
- I have had the opportunity to question one of the person's in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.
- I understand that my child is being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to have him/her participate in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.
- I have been given a signed copy of this informed consent form, which is mine to keep.

Signature of Parent

Printed Name of Parent

Date

Signature of Witness

Printed Name of Witness

Date

A. Youth Participant Consent

Ms., Mrs. or Mr. _____ has explained the research study called *Community-Based Prevention Marketing: Building Capacity for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Sarasota Demonstration Project)* to me. I agree to be in this study. [for youth ages 7-12 it was read to them, or youth ages 13-17 they read themselves]

Signature of Participant/Youth Printed Name of Participant

Date

Investigator Statement

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above protocol. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the subject signing this consent form understands the nature, demands, risks and benefits involved in participating in this study.

Signature of Investigator

Printed Name of Investigator

Date

Institutional Approval of Study and Informed Consent

This research project/study and informed consent form were reviewed and approved by the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects. This approval is valid until the date provided below. The Board may be contacted a (813)631-4498.

Approval Consent Form Expiration Date: February 18, 2000

1999 Summer Youth Research Training
Interview Scripts

Hello, my name is _____ and I am an interviewer for the Sarasota Prevention Research Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. I am going to be asking you some questions about youth activities in Sarasota County. I will be taping your responses to help me remember what you said today, however your responses will be kept completely confidential. You may stop the interview at any time, for any reason.

Question #1: What city do you live in?

Question #2: Do you like to participate in any summer activities?

Question #3: What types of summer activities do you like to participate in?

Question #4: Of all the activities you just mentioned, which is your favorite activity?

Question #5: Why is that activity your favorite?

Question #7: How many times per week do you participate in your favorite activity?

Question #8: If you could bring any activity to Sarasota that is not currently here, what activity would that be?

Question #9: What do you think most Sarasota youth do during the summer?

Question #10: Do you think that Sarasota youth would be interested in an ice-skating rink? Why or Why not?

Question #11: do you think there are enough activities for youth in Sarasota? Explain.

Those are all of the questions that we have. Thank you for your time.

1999 Summer Youth Research Training
USF Observer Interviewer Checklist

Did the interviewer:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Check the tape recorder and tape | YES | NO | N/A |
| Read the introduction | YES | NO | N/A |
| Read the introduction naturally | YES | NO | N/A |
| Establish trust and rapport | YES | NO | N/A |
| Have friendly body language | YES | NO | N/A |
| Use inappropriate verbal cues | YES | NO | N/A |
| Use inappropriate non-verbal cues | YES | NO | N/A |
| Use leading questions | YES | NO | N/A |
| Use good listening skills | YES | NO | N/A |
| Use good probing skills | YES | NO | N/A |
| Take good notes | YES | NO | N/A |
| Have eye contact while taking notes | YES | NO | N/A |
| Ask all questions | YES | NO | N/A |
| Close the interview | YES | NO | N/A |
| Other: | YES | NO | N/A |
| Other: | YES | NO | N/A |
| Other: | YES | NO | N/A |

1999 Summer Youth Research Training Practice Focus Group Guide

Welcome

Thanks for coming

My name is _____ and this is _____ who will be assisting me today during the group and taking notes.

You were selected to participate in today's group discussion because of your age and your unique insight into things to do in Sarasota.

Overview of the Topic

We've invited you to join in our discussion today because we need your opinions of providing new activities and place for teens in Sarasota.

We are interested in all your ideas, comments and suggestions

No right or wrong answers: want both positive and negative comments

Guidelines or Ground Rules

Focus group is like survey but more informal, like a conversation.

My job is to guide the discussion so please talk to one another

Group discussion so don't wait to be called on

Please feel free to disagree with each other, respectfully of course, and ask the group questions.

We're tape recording this discussion so please speak one at a time so I can get your opinions on the tape.

Microphone is very sensitive so I may occasionally remind you not to bang on table.

Your names won't be attached to your comments

We have a lot to cover so I might change the subject or move ahead, but let me know if you want to add something.

Introduction

We're going to start by going around the room. Give your name, age and favorite "hangout" or place to go with friends.

Question

What do people your age do for fun in Sarasota?

Question

Where are some places that people your age go to have fun?

-beach?

-movies?

-Clubs?

-Anywhere else?

Question

What are some things that might keep teens from getting to going to the places you mentioned?

-Money?

-transportation?

-parental stuff?

-police?

Question

If you had to pick just one thing to add to Sarasota for people your age, what would it be?

Closing

[Provide brief summary of comments].

Is there anything else that you would like to add or is there anything I've left out?

Thank you for coming. We really appreciate all of your comments.

This training is a collaborative effort
between



The University of South Florida



Sarasota County Health
Department