

Guidelines for Personal Sharing

Establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries while sharing is essential to supporting safe space.

What You're Sharing...

Sharing personal information that is not sensitive, such as favorite foods, a hobby, a funny story about a pet, etc. can build a healthy teen-adult relationship.

Facilitators should NOT share sensitive personal information; this includes sexual experiences, drug/alcohol use, mental health, trauma, legal history, etc.

Regarding personal values, facilitators should

- Not share their personal values
- Not present any value as “better” or “best”
- Not adopt or assume a shared values context for the group (Ex: “Everyone should attend church...”)
- Uphold “universal values” of health and safety (Ex: “Everyone deserves to be in safe and healthy relationships. No one should be pressured to do something they don’t want to do.”)

Anytime a facilitator decides to share personal information, they should ask themselves:

- Is this sharing within healthy boundaries?
- Does me sharing this information help move the group towards the program’s goal?
- Is this information relatable and appropriate to the program?
- Can I share this information without having a strong emotional response myself?

When You're Sharing...

Teens should do the majority of the talking during program. However, if a group is hesitant to share or needs an example, it might be appropriate for the facilitator to share.

Why You're Sharing...

Healthy teen-adult relationships are teen-centered and focused, not adult-centered and focused.

Sharing personal information that is extremely personal or sensitive may seem like a way to build a relationship or let teens know you “get it.” However, we need to be cautious and consider how our sharing might affect participants—even if we have good intentions, sharing sensitive personal information can negatively affect our relationship with a teen and/or their experience in program.

There are a variety of reasons for this:

- A facilitator’s sharing may influence participants. Participants may think, “They did it and turned out okay...”
- Participants may develop the idea that they are “too different” from the facilitator or group and feel judged, isolated or hesitant to talk to the facilitator in the future.
- Related to trauma, a facilitator’s sharing may be triggering for a participant or influence participants to feel they need to take care of the facilitator.
- The facilitator’s experiences may create a distraction from teens’ own experiences and development.