

- Make room to summarize and highlight what has been learned in the session
- Encourage feedback: what did people enjoy, what did they find challenging, what was difficult?

Handling Disagreement and Conflict

- Don't worry if people disagree: it is not the aim of a learning event to produce conformity
- Make sure that people can be listened to without being interrupted
- Encourage people to preface remarks by 'I think' or 'this is my opinion'
- Aim to think the best of other people and expect all members of the group to do the same
- Do not make fun of other people's ideas or allow any member of the group to do so
- Try hard to understand the point being made whether you agree or not.

'We must always remember that learning is an inter-personal activity. It is something which people do for and with each other. One can learn alone, although even with a book one is not entirely alone, but the best learning, especially in the case of adults, is almost always in groups.'

John Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?*

August 2006



Wakefield Ministry Scheme

Teaching Adults Guidance for Tutors

2. Learning in Small Groups

GR K2

A Learning Group is more than a 'Class'

A class might be thought of as a collection of individuals who have assembled for a lesson- they are all there to learn about the same subject from the teacher. But an adult learning group is more than a class: the members of the group will be *learning from each other as well as from the teacher.*

A learning group is made up of different people with contrasting experience. They need to come ready to respect, listen to and try to understand one another. In order to help this to happen a group needs to agree on certain principles e.g. 'one person speaks at a time', 'what is said in this room stays in this room' and so on.

Members need to be sensitive to the other people in the group. People are coming wanting to learn, wanting perhaps to acquire some new knowledge or skill to use in their Christian discipleship. If people feel their contribution is affirmed they are likely to learn and grow. It is one of the tutor's tasks to make sure that no one is left out.

The adult learning group will regularly be working in three 'modes' which need to be balanced in each session. In relation to the subject matter of the session they will be:

- Reflecting on their prior experience and knowledge and learning from each other
- Receiving fresh resources for their learning from the session leader
- Considering the implications of their learning for their practical context in church and world.

For more guidance on how groups work, please see the Wakefield Ministry Scheme pack 'Understanding Groups', GR J

The Tutor's Task of Enabling the Group

In order to encourage the learning process, the teacher or tutor needs to pay attention to several elements:

The Setting or Environment of the Group

- Make sure people are comfortable, not too hot or too cold, and that the seating is appropriately arranged
- Ensure that refreshments (or at least water) are available and that people know where the toilets are
- Be sure everything that is needed for the session is to hand- notes - handouts- paper - pens etc.

The Process of the Session

- Start and end at the agreed time
- Do not dominate the group or impose your opinions, but help everyone to take part
- Do not hurry to give 'the right answers'. Let everybody put their ideas in
- Watch for people who look as if they want to contribute to discussion and invite them in by name
- Encourage participation but respect silence
- Listen carefully to what people say and be alert to what they are not saying
- Be sure people feel free to ask questions without feeling stupid.