

Anonymous Peer Problem Solving Exercise



Facilitator's Notes

Time Required: 40 minutes

Objectives: Explores group's own knowledge/strengths/peer support.

Description: A peer problem solving group discussion or 'conch' discussion.

Resources required: A 'conch' which could be anything to hand - a wig, a wand, a puppet, a hat etc. You will need pieces of paper or post-it notes to write problems on. A hat or receptacle to post notes in.

The term 'conch' comes from the book 'Lord of the Flies' by William Golding and represents a powerful symbol of democracy. The person holding the 'conch' can speak uninterrupted.

1. Invent a fictitious Agony Aunt. You might want to explain what an Agony Aunt does - someone you write to anonymously to get their advice on a particular problem. Anyone can be an Agony Aunt/Uncle - even you! In fact this is your chance to prove what sensible advice you can give. The Agony Aunt/Uncle will be whoever has the 'conch'.

2. Explain that only the person with the 'conch' can talk at any one time. This will prevent people from talking all at once and provide a sense of order. This method works well with talkative/lively groups, encouraging less confident members to speak with the aid of the 'conch'.
3. Allow the group time to write their problems on pieces of paper and post into the receptacle.
4. A volunteer reads out the first problem and selects a group member to be the the Agony Aunt/Uncle.
5. Holding the 'conch' they give advice on the problem and can nominate further contributors by passing the 'conch'.
6. People who have opinions can request the 'conch' in order to express them.
7. Once the reader of the problem is satisfied that they have enough good advice the next person reads the next problem and selects another Agony Aunt/Uncle.
8. Repeat this until all the problems have been resolved.

TOP TIP

You might want to plant a couple of fun/controversial/relevant problems