

REALTALK TIPS

Directions:

- Use these tips to help you facilitate an effective Icebreaker or REALTALK group.

Get prepared.

- Always review and plan for the selected Ice Breaker and RDQ.
- Discuss any concerns you have about the prompts for an Ice Breaker or RDQ with your club Adviser(s).
- Bring any of your prepared notes or other materials to the REALTALK group to support you if needed.
- Announce or post the REALTALK group well in advance to encourage participation.
- Practice a mock REALTALK group with your family or friends to improve your facilitation skills.
- Seek out youth who may be interested in participating in a REALTALK group and encourage them to attend.
- Determine procedures with your Adviser for youth who arrive late or leave early. Use some of these suggestions:
 - The end of the Icebreaker can be used as a cutoff for late arrivals.
 - Use a "Do Not Interrupt" or "Meeting in Progress" sign to minimize the number of interruptions.
 - Always encourage youth to attend the entire REALTALK group to benefit from the discussion.
 - If a youth must leave early, make sure they have checked-in with the Adviser ahead of time to ensure they leave at an appropriate time.



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Monitor your body language and behavior.

- **Model the following behaviors and attitudes you expect from others in the group.**
 - Welcome all participants individually to the REALTALK group.
 - Respect all group members equally. Avoid favoritism when selecting youth to share first during the Icebreaker or RDQ.
 - Give positive feedback and be encouraging to participants who share with the group.
 - Practice confidentiality. (When necessary, remind participants what is said in the group, stays in the group.)
- **Monitor the volume of your voice to ensure all participants can hear you.**
- **Lean forward when you listen and direct your attention to the person speaking.**
- **Smile when appropriate.**
- **If you are unable to hear a participant or need clarification regarding their thoughts, use statements like these to help:**
 - *“(Person's name), I want to make sure the group understands what you shared. Could you repeat your thoughts again for the group?”*
 - *“(Person's name), I'm going to summarize what I thought you said. Please feel free to correct me if I'm wrong.”*
- **Be aware of body cues from participants which indicate they may be uncomfortable or anxious regarding the selected RDQ. Talk with your Adviser(s) about ways to help participants feel more comfortable or at ease.**

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Monitor and respect reactions and feelings.

- Be prepared for occasional silence after introducing RDQs. Share your response to the questions or prompts if necessary to get the group started.
- Give participants the right to decline from sharing. Never require, but always encourage participants to share.
- If participants are confused by the RDQs, read the questions or prompts again. Paraphrase only when necessary.
- If participants ask for your personal input, only share your thoughts when it is appropriate and you are comfortable doing so.
- When you feel the need to summarize what a participant has shared, be sure to focus on the content of their words. Use these sentence starters, if needed:
 - *"What I hear you saying (person's name) is _____. Is that correct?"*
 - *"Here is what I have heard so far (person's name). Is that correct?"*
 - *"(Person's name), let me see if I can recap what you have shared."*
- Build up your participants' confidence by using some of these actions:
 - Nod or smile when appropriate to show participants you are interested in what they are sharing.
 - Lean forward when you listen and direct your attention to the person speaking.
- Let your participants know their input matters by using prompts like these:
 - *"I really like what you said (person's name), about this topic. I think it can really help someone else."*
 - *"Thank you (person's name) for sharing your thoughts with the group."*
 - *"What a great idea (person's name)."*
- Learn to recognize some common barriers for learning and understanding from participants (cultural social, experiential, etc.). Not everyone will relate to certain RDQs.
- Control your own biases when responding to a participant's thoughts or feelings.
- Work with your Advisers to identify and work on your own biases. This way you will be more aware of your biases to be a better group leader.



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Control the flow of the conversation.

- Use a ball or another object to determine who has the floor and can speak.
- Allow as many participants as possible to share.
- Ask all participants to silence their cell phones and other devices to avoid distractions.
- Avoid letting one or two participants dominate the discussion.
- Avoid letting the conversation stall. If no one is sharing, use these sentence starters to get the conversation moving again:
 - *“(Person's name), can you tell us more about the story you were sharing earlier.”*
 - *“(Person's name), do you have anything else you want to share about this topic?”*
 - *“Is there anyone who hasn't shared or would like to add more to our discussion?”*
- Redirect the group when they wander off topic. Use these examples to redirect the group:
 - *“Is there anyone who hasn't had a chance to respond to the original prompt? Let me read it again for the group.”*
 - *“We have a lot of different perspectives here, but let's go back to the original question(s)?”*
 - *“Does anyone want to share what they thought about (person's name) interesting comments from earlier.”*
 - *“I'm so happy many of you are willing to share, but let's get back to the topic of our discussion.”*
- Determine a non-verbal cue between you and the Adviser(s) that you can use during a REALTALK group when you feel yourself losing control and need help getting the group back on track.
(Example: A raised arm with a closed fist could be used to indicate you need assistance.)
- Talk with your Advisers on recognizing cues to change the topic or allowing the the audience to take the conversation in another appropriate direction.
- As the scheduled end time approaches, remind the group of the amount of time remaining so they have time to prepare before leaving the group.
- Don't be afraid to ask the Adviser(s) for help, when necessary.



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Thoroughly close the REALTALK group.

- Start a wrap up approximately five minutes before the scheduled end time.
- Show the group you are attentive to their needs but value their input by using some of these statements:
 - *“It is nearly time for us to go. Is there someone who would like to share any other thoughts on our topic for today?”*
 - *“Has anyone learned something significant today they would like to share with the group?”*
 - *“We only have _____ minutes left for this REALTALK group. Is there anyone who wants to share one last thought.”*
- When everyone is finished sharing, be sure to thank them for attending the REALTALK group and participating.
- Provide the date and time for the next REALTALK group and encourage future involvement.
- After the REALTALK group, seek out participants and get to know them better.
- If time permits, offer to stay after the REALTALK group to speak with participants who need your help or assistance.
- Schedule a time to debrief on the REALTALK group with your fellow Team Leaders and Advisers.