

**FORMS OF
PRESENTATIONS**

VIII. THE MANY FORMS OF PRESENTATIONS

The presentations you have can take any of several forms, some of which are **lectures, guided discussions, case studies, and role playing.**

A. LECTURES

A **lecture** is a prepared talk by a single person. Although usually informative, lectures do not encourage the participation of the audience. Since one of ASPIRA's main goals is to empower parents and to encourage participation, lectures should not be used frequently. Take a look at **EXHIBIT #9** to see some of the **drawbacks of one-way communication or lectures.**



EXHIBIT #9:

Effects of One-Way Communication (lectures) on the Message You Are Trying to Get Across

One-way communication is affected by three processes: **leveling, sharpening, and assimilation.**

LEVELING

- reduced amount of information is passed to the next receiver
- less information is remembered, fewer details are remembered
- message grows shorter and becomes easily told and grasped

SHARPENING

- parts of the message are highlighted, sharpened
- these parts are easily remembered, while most of the message is forgotten
- only a limited number of details is remembered

ASSIMILATION

- the receiver takes much of the message into his/her own frame of reference and personality
- interpretation and memories of what the person heard is affected by his/her own thoughts and feelings
- unfamiliar information is changed into a familiar context
- material that appears irrelevant is left out and substituted for material that gives meaning in the person's frame of reference.

Adapted from: Johnson, David W. and Johnson, Frank P. (1987). Joining Together: Group Theory and Skills. Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

B. CASE STUDIES

Case studies look at a particular problem or related problems which group members are asked to analyze or resolve. They can be real-life or fictional stories. The APEX Workshop Series Manual uses many fictional cases in its workshops. You do not need a formal workshop format to use case studies to get a discussion going. Your parent groups can use case studies too.

CASE STUDY TECHNIQUES

To use a case study as a discussion stimulator, you:

1. Describe a situation
2. Ask your group to develop a plan of action
3. Discuss the situation more generally

1. **Describe a situation** that illustrates the discussion topic. The situation can be taken from real life or fictional. Do not talk too long. Just give the bare facts--who is involved and what their problems or objectives are.

You may be able to take some case studies right from newspaper articles. Or play a tape recording of a short interview with the actual person you are using as an example--it is more interesting if that person describes the situation in his own words. The APEX Workshop Series Manual provides several case studies as examples. They are always followed by an exercise designed to stimulate discussion. However, in a meeting situation, you might want to leave the solutions open for group discussion by not telling what happened or by suggesting several choices of what the people in the case could do.

2. **Ask your group to develop a plan of action.** Ask them to talk over the situation and decide what they think the people involved should do (or should have done) in order to handle their problem and achieve their goals more effectively. At this point, you could also involve group members in role playing some of their suggestions and options to see if their ideas are really practical--or just to try practicing what they are preaching.

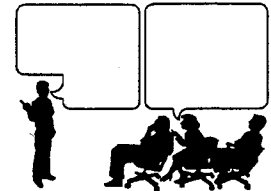
Some questions you might ask the group include... Why did it happen?... What has already been done?... What can be done in the future?... How would you have handled the situation differently?... What results would you like to see?

3. **Discuss the situation more generally.** A case study helps people learn how to think before they give a fast answer--they have to analyze some facts about a realistic situation before giving their opinions. But once you have studied one or two cases, it is important to encourage group members to see it in perspective. Some aspects of the case apply generally to many similar situations they may face in the future. For example, it is safe to assume some general rules from a case study of a student who applied too late and did not get accepted by colleges which otherwise would have accepted him.

But sometimes people should not generalize from one case to all similar situations. To clarify this, you can ask questions like... Why did the people in this case respond the way they did?... How did their particular attitudes, skills and behavior influence what happened to them?... What generalizations can you make about this conflict that will help you understand and get better results from similar situations you may face?

C. GUIDED GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In **guided discussions**, the facilitator encourages dialogue, but uses challenging questions to channel the discussion. Guided discussions require some understanding of the issues by the participants. This is a learning process that encourages full participation. Here are some ideas:



After you show a slide, film, or video tape, or present a case study, you will probably want to discuss it with your group. Once you have kicked off the group discussion, a facilitator can guide the discussion to prevent such problems as:

- rambling discussions which do not move toward action.
- endless descriptions of personal experiences.
- a few people dominating, while others lose interest or become irritated.
- arguments or overly critical comments which prevent positive agreement on what action to take.
- someone who takes off on a tangent ignoring the topic most group members were discussing.
- people who ignore minority points of view.

listening problems--people who "steps on the speaker's last words", interrupting others...people who are so anxious to give their comment that they sit holding their breath until the speaker stops speaking and haven't heard a word he said.

You may want to video tape (or record on audio tape) these discussions and replay sections to help group members become more aware of their interpersonal skills.

D. ROLE PLAY AND SIMULATION TECHNIQUES

You or one of your group members describes a specific situation. At any point in a group discussion, you may want to help the group members stop talking abstractly and actually try out the skills they are saying should be used. You then can use such active learning techniques as role play and simulation.

For example, instead of just talking about how to handle a teacher-parent conference, parents take the roles of teacher and parent, describe a specific situation and act out how they would handle the situation.

You assign roles of the two or three people involved to group members. Give each one a clear role and objective. The rest of the group acts as observers--their job is to look for specific points such as "How do you think the teacher played by José feels about the parent Iris is playing?"

After a few minutes, stop the role play--don't let it drag on after the problem has been handled. Discuss how each player felt and ask the observers for their reactions. Other group members can play the same roles to try to work out different ways of handling the situation. Or, the same two people can switch roles and re-play the situation in an attempt to see how the other person feels and can develop empathy.

Role playing should be used carefully. Role play sessions can drag on too long, make people too self-conscious, or create serious problems between group members who may use their roles to make personal criticisms of each other. Only leaders with experience or professional training in this technique should use it. For other examples of role-play sessions, refer to The APEX Workshop Manual.

These forms do not have to be used apart from each other. A meeting could begin with a short lecture, followed by role playing and finish with a case study. A format you can use to experiment with different combinations of discussion formats is included as EXHIBIT #10.

**EXHIBIT #10:
WORKSHOP/MEETING FORMATS--SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW TO
REARRANGE THEM**

1. Lectures
2. Guided Discussions
3. Case Study
4. Role Playing

1. Lectures could be followed by guided discussions.
2. A case study could be followed by a guided discussion.
3. A guided discussion could introduce the meeting, followed by a case study with a lecturer to discuss the implications of the study, and then a concluding discussion.
4. Role playing could illustrate a problem a parent faced with a teacher or a child, which could lead either into guided discussion or a case study to make more general the specific problem experienced in the role play.
5. Role playing could act out a case study, and then a lecture followed by a guided discussion could bring its meaning home.

You can use many possible combinations to have variety in your meetings.