



# SDDT Focus Group Facilitation Training provided by Raimi + Associates

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**Welcome!**

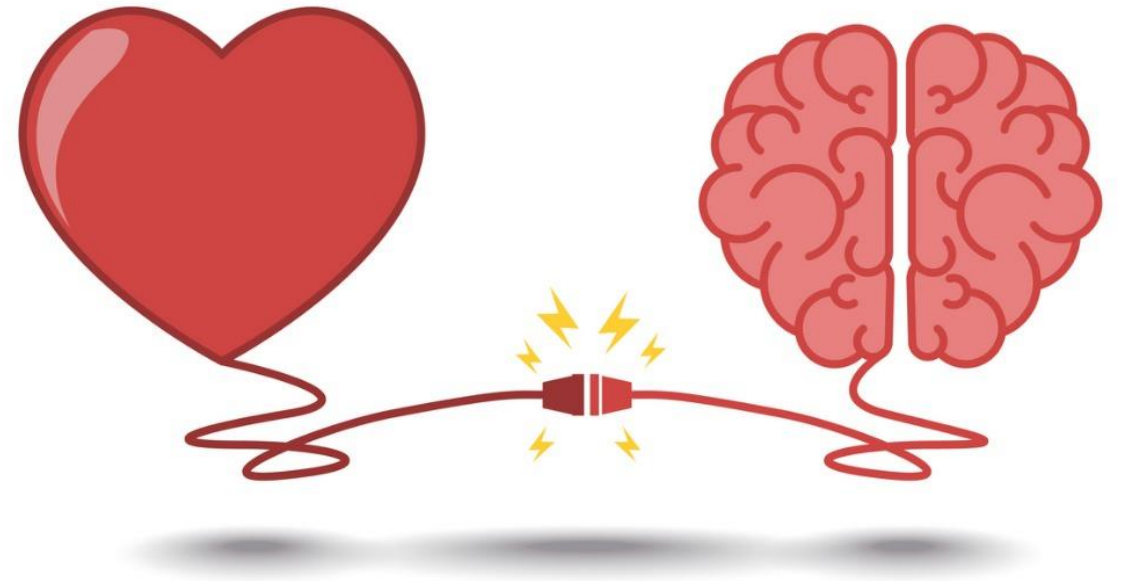
# Agenda

1. **Introductions**
2. **Focus group overview**
  - What a focus group is
  - Role of facilitators + facilitation techniques
3. **Practice!**
  - 2 practice rounds 15 min
  - Troubleshoot challenges
4. **Nuts and bolts of focus groups**
  - Recruitment
  - Notetaking
  - Other logistics
5. **Close**



# Training Objectives

- Increase understanding of benefits and purpose of focus groups
- Increase confidence in facilitating focus groups



# Introductions

- 1) Turn your video + mic on and **introduce yourself!**
- 2) Have you **participated** in a focus group?
  - If yes, raise your virtual hand!
- 3) Have you **facilitated** a focus group?
  - If yes, raise your virtual hand or share in chat.

**What is a focus group?  
Why conduct them?  
When are they useful?**

# What is a focus group?

- A **guided** discussion
- Usually between **8-12 individuals**
- Participants are **experts** because of life experiences
- Participants are brought together to **tell their story** in their own words
- **Facilitated** by a skilled moderator
- Important to keep **careful and systematic notes**
- Important to analyze the information in a systematic way to **identify themes + nuances** about the topic of interest



# Benefits of a focus group

- Group process – interactive
- Opportunity to probe and get in-depth information unavailable in survey data collection
- Fosters discussion which can generate new ideas
- Some people are more comfortable in a group setting than 1:1 interview (less pressure)
- Relatively quick results
- More cost effective than individual interviews





# Limitations of focus groups

- Data not generalizable or statistically significant
- Less control over discussion than in an individual interview
- Groups can vary considerably
- Difficult to control the number of participants
- Can be difficult to convene
- Time consuming to analyze data



# What's the ideal focus group?

- **Group size 8-12 people**
- **Generally lasts 1 to 1.5 hours**
- **Typically incentives are offered (and food if focus group is conducted in-person)**



# Overview of the Roles of the Facilitator

# Roles of the Facilitator

- ❑ Guide & keep discussion on track
- ❑ Encourage participation & open conversation
- ❑ Be non-judgmental & not influence answers
- ❑ Establish rapport & make participants feel relaxed
- ❑ Ask questions and probes as written
- ❑ Engage non-participants
- ❑ Deal with dominant talkers (ramblers, grippers)
- ❑ Nip any disrespect in the bud



# Facilitation Techniques

# Focus Group Facilitation Techniques: Don't's



**DON'Ts**

- × Express your views
- × Agree or disagree with participants
- × Influence conversation through comments such as “excellent” or “very good”

# Focus Group Facilitation Techniques: Do's



**DOs**



## **Pause**

- Resist the temptation to fill the silence



## **Scan**

- Move your eyes across participants' foreheads around the room, inviting participation non-verbally



## **Probe**

- Be sure you really understand what is being said by asking for more information
- “Would you explain further?” “Could you say more about that?”

# Before getting started with the questions

- ✓ Introduce yourself and co-facilitator
- ✓ Explain the purpose of the focus group + how information will be used
- ✓ Remind people when focus group will end and briefly explain how incentives will be given out
- ✓ Explain what confidentiality means
- ✓ Encourage people to participate and to ask questions if they aren't sure what something means
- ✓ Review ground rules



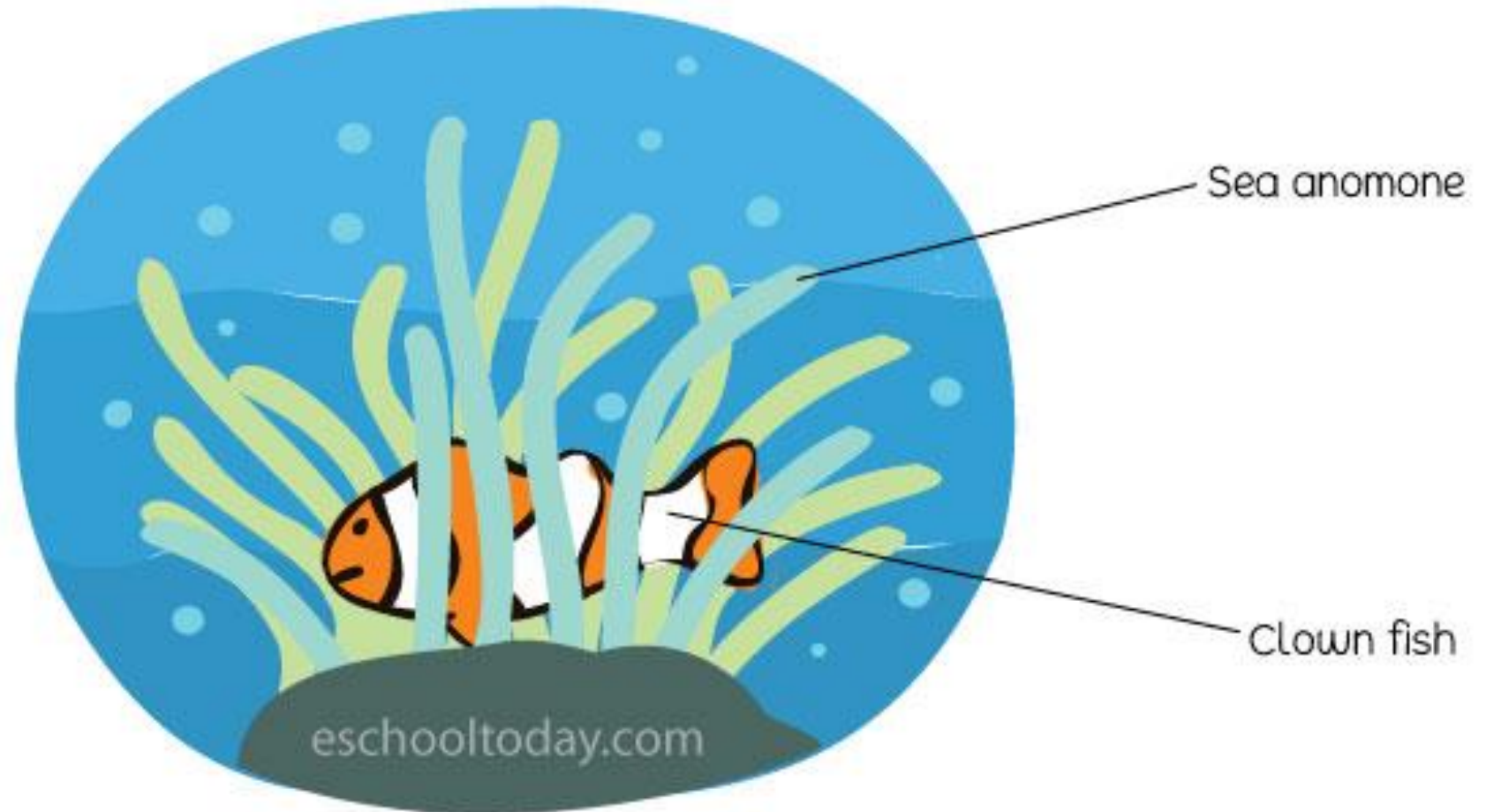
# Establish group agreements

- ✓ No right or wrong answers
- ✓ Speak one at a time (“One mic”)
- ✓ What’s said here stays here / Maintain confidentiality
- ✓ No interruptions or other disrespect
- ✓ Everyone should have a chance to speak
- ✓ Anything you’d like to add?



# Co-Facilitation Tips

- ✓ Ensure each facilitator is clear about their role in the focus group
- ✓ Anything else?



**Let's Practice!**

# Activity: Mock Focus Group

- Identify the co-facilitators
- Review focus group questions
- Conduct mock focus group
- Debrief

the MORE  
YOU PRACTICE  
THE PRACTICE  
BETTER  
YOU GET

# Troubleshooting Challenges

# Facilitating with Specific Kinds of Participants

## The Rambler

- ✓ Jump in during a pause or at the (seeming) end of a thought, paraphrase main point(s), and ask if you are understanding what the person is saying – then invite others to respond

## “I don’t know”

- ✓ Pause to see if others will respond
- ✓ Ask another probe question

## Slow Poke

- ✓ OK if person is not also a rambler or answering every question
- ✓ If answering every question, remind group to share the airspace or step forward/step back

# Coordination Tips

# Recruiting Focus Group Participants

- ❑ Identify where or how you will make sure that eligible participants find out about the focus group
- ❑ Create simple recruitment materials that clearly identify:
  - The kind of people who you want to participate
  - What the focus group is for or focused on (briefly!)
  - Date, time, and location
  - Incentive
  - How people can sign up/express interest or learn more
- ❑ Confirm more than you would ideally want to balance out no-shows (but not more than you feel prepared to include)
- ❑ For online/zoom focus groups: use an online survey to collect contact information, availability, and demographics

## Considerations When Deciding Who to Recruit + How

- Number of focus groups you will be conducting
- Key assessment or evaluation questions
- Whether there are specific perspectives or experiences you want to make sure are included



# Responsibilities of the Notetaker

- ✓ Have computer (or print-out of protocol) ready with questions and space to take notes
- ✓ Ask if it is ok to record the focus group (remember to press record!)
- ✓ Note # of participants, as well as language of, date of, and location of focus group – sometimes assigning a number or letter to each participant helps!
- ✓ Work with facilitator in keeping group on track
- ✓ Maintain neutrality in appearance and demeanor
- ✓ Ask for clarification if needed
- ✓ Pay attention to the recording

- Use a new bullet or paragraph for each person who speaks (and for each thought expressed by participants)
- Use participants' words as close to verbatim as possible (except for "umm...")
- Note major non-verbal cues (heads nodding, etc.)
- Fill in the gaps/complete thoughts as soon as possible after focus group

# Nuts & Bolts of a Successful Focus Group: In-Person

## Before the focus group

- ✓ Confirm participants, childcare provider(s), interpreter, and anyone else you need there
- ✓ Prep supplies!
  - Recording device (mp3 player or smartphone with sufficient memory) and batteries/charger
  - Incentives (if physical gift cards or give-away items) and either receipt sheet or paper surveys and pens
  - Pitcher(s) for water/spa water, cups
  - Unless serving a meal, finger-food (e.g., fresh fruit, cheese sticks), plates, napkins
  - “Kid kit”

## Day-of the focus group

- ✓ Make sure you have all your supplies with you!
- ✓ Put up signs at location entrance, make sure that people close to entrance know that focus group is happening
- ✓ Arrange chairs, put out refreshments or meal
- ✓ Set up childcare space, check in with person/people doing childcare

# Nuts & Bolts of a Successful Focus Group: Virtual

## Before the focus group

- ✓ Set up a process for people to sign up ahead of time – if digital literacy is high, use online survey / if not, provide support ahead of time to support participation
- ✓ Send confirmation and reminder emails, calendar invitations, and potentially text or WhatsApp messages – AND let people know if they are not invited to participate (phrased carefully)

## Before the focus group (same day)

- ✓ Check your tech early and often! (e.g., bandwidth, audio, and recording)
- ✓ Have materials open on your desktop (e.g., Word doc with questions, URL to participant survey)

## After the focus group (within 24 hours)

- ✓ Clarify and add to notes
- ✓ Hold time to send out email or text gift cards within 24 hours after group (sooner is better)

**Questions?**

# Stay in Touch!

## SDDT Evaluation Team

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