



## Sample Discussion Prompts for Advisory Boards

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This document provides examples of the types of prompts that facilitators or researchers can use to facilitate meaningful discussion. These prompts can be used to foster learning amongst members or in meetings with researchers. In general, avoid asking yes/no question. It is helpful to have some questions in mind before meeting, which could include questions from the researchers who will be presenting. **Please refer to the “Bureau of Sages Review Criteria” for discussion prompts specifically related to research.** To learn more about facilitating groups and communicating with older adults and nursing home residents, see the “Facilitation Tips.”

### ***Promote respectful, balanced discussion:***

- *Acknowledge/Validate:* Thank you for saying that, [name]. No one mentioned that. OR We appreciate a different view. OR That was a helpful contribution.
- *Control verbal people:* [Names] have brought up some good points! We want to be sure everyone has a chance to add to this. Does anyone else have something to add?
- *Encourage different views:* I am hearing a wide variety of experiences/views such as [recap or list them]. What other experiences/views are missing?
- *Give an opportunity for others to speak up:* For those of you have not yet contributed, feel free to jump in. (If appropriate, use a round robin technique, giving each person a chance to say something.)
- *If there is no response, try a different approach:* Maybe we need to think about this in a different way [reword the question].
- *Contribute in a way that encourages discussion:* I heard some interesting points that got me thinking. [Briefly share your thoughts] What do you think about that?
- *Allow for silence, wait for pauses, and listen carefully.*
- *Monitor non-verbal signs of boredom, impatience, dissatisfaction, etc.*
- *Be aware of how your own assumptions and biases could affect discussion.*

### ***Manage talkers and interrupters:***

- *Start each meeting with rules for discussion.*
- *Respectfully control lengthy talkers:* This is very interesting, but I want to respect the group’s time. I apologize for interrupting but we need to make sure we have time to hear from everyone.
- *Minimize side conversations:* I see you had some things to say on that topic. Can you share that with us? OR I apologize for interrupting but it is easier to listen if one person speaks at a time.

- *Get back on task after disruptive humor:* Well lets' get back to work here. [in a serious tone] We were discussing the importance of [recap topic]. Are there any other ideas or opinions about that?
- *Greet newcomers and latecomers:* Welcome, we are in the middle of a discussion. Feel free to have a seat and listen in. I can tell you more about the purpose of this group after our meeting.

***Encourage elaboration:***

- *Turn members' answers into questions:* I like what you said about including more information for participants and their families. Can you give an example of what we should say or how we should word it? What other types of information we should include? What do we need to tell participants? What do we need to tell families?
- *Ask for examples:* Can someone give me an example? Can you give an example to help us understand what you mean? [If needed, provide a concrete example to get discussion started.]
- *Prompt for more explanation:* Tell me more about that.
- *Ask for an alternative explanation:* How could we/you describe/define that in a different way?
- *Check in/restate:* I'm not sure I understood what you were saying. I heard [restate what the person said] Did I understand you correctly?

***Minimize complaints:***

- *Turn feelings into "ideas":* I hear what you are saying. I can see that you are frustrated/upset. It is an important issue/We have discussed this issue before. Let talk about this type of issue relates to the [topic/study].
- *Generalize concerns/complaints:* How does this issue impact other older adults in similar situations?
- *Related concerns/complaints to research:* How can this researchers/this study take that into account? What does that tell us about what matters for older adults in this type of study?
- *Provide alternatives:* We need to be respectful the group's time today. I encourage you to talk to staff or bring that up with the Resident Council. [If needed talk one on one after the meeting.]
- *Mention the group's purpose:* We want to be sure we have enough time to discuss [topic of the meeting], but I am making a note about your concern/issue. [write it down]

**Control conflict:**

- *Acknowledge differences in opinion:* It seems like we have some very different views of this issue. It is ok to not agree. It helps us see a different aspect of the issue. Are there other views? Does everyone agree with this idea?
- *Protect members from being attacked:* Remember we are here to listen to each other. There are no right or wrong answers. We need to hear each person's views/experiences.
- *Mention the group's purpose.*

**Redirect sensitive issues:**

- *Carefully acknowledge and change topics.* We appreciate your willingness to share your experience. Researchers also need to be sensitive to personal experiences. They have ethical obligations. Could this research/study inadvertently harm participants in any way? How can their privacy be protected?
- *Protect the group.* This is an important issue for you, but I want to be sure we have enough time to get everyone's input. I am happy to talk with you after the meeting.
- *Mention the group's purpose.*