

How to Facilitate Street Speaking

1. Announce that the group is going to do street speaking with delighted anticipation.

(Remember how growthful it was for you.) Allow or even encourage lots of emotional reaction. Ask how many people feel nervous, scared, etc. Normalize and give full permission to expression of fears. Tell how scared you were, etc. Emphasize that dealing w/ fear is one objective. If the group is highly responsible and self-aware, I announce before a meal so people can work on resistance over the meal. If not, I announce right on the spot and facilitate every minute.

2. Describe the activity, when, where, etc. Concretizing the activity helps people deal. I usually say at that point that no one will be coerced into doing it, but everyone needs to prepare, go together to give support, be part of it, etc. "Even if you right now cannot imagine yourself doing it, see if you can allow for even the remote possibility that you might anyway." Keep asking for questions. Emphasize that the goal is as a training tool, rather than as a form of social action. Give your information in small bits so there is abundant interaction -- this is the worst time for a mini-lecture!

3. Describe the design: "Next we'll prepare by . . . so that we'll be more ready to do it, and then we'll go down town (etc. etc.)"

4. [OPTIONAL] Handling fear exercise. "Since street speaking as a training tool has to do with handling fear, let's take a minute to learn from our own experience, since all of us have experience in successfully handling fear in our lives. What are some ways you have found that work for you?" List their ways. If there's time, they can even in threes or pairs tell each other "A time when they handled fear successfully." When studying the list, point out the variety of methods available to them. You can (depending on goals of the workshop) invite people to consider stretching by trying a new method.

5. Preparation of the talk. Explain very briefly (again, interaction is great) the differences between a regular speech and street speaking in the way the talk is developed. Suggest three basic points, beginning/middle/end, stories are great, personal is great. . . . Quickly send them off to develop their talks, in pairs.

6. [OPTIONAL] Roleplay the street meeting. Have people take turns getting up on a box in the training room, accept very brief feedback from people on what they liked about what the speaker did. If the group is strong, a suggestion or two for change is OK.

7. Do the street meeting. Be sure to give participants two turns -- they are often reluctant to go a second time, especially if a large group (a let-down after the high). I find the second time is for many people the time they remember best and learn most from. If the group is larger than 16, it pays to lead half of them down the street (after the first space is "secured") and start a second street meeting. Obviously it helps to have a co-facilitator.

8. De-brief. Allow lots of personal anecdotes. Ask about surprises, things they didn't expect in their own experience, differences of self before and after, handling fear, how people gave and got support, etc. This is a good time for empowerment quotes on fear: Gandhi, Starhawk, etc. "If we were doing this as a social action tool, how would we want to change it?"