

Speaking Out Exercise

This set of exercises gives participants a chance to practice giving a short talk in front of a small, supportive audience. Learning by doing is a good way to build confidence!

Defining Best Practices: The facilitator first asks group members to recall occasions when they heard a really good speech versus a really bad or boring one. Group members are asked to describe the key elements of a **good** speaking performance in contrast with a **poor** performance. The facilitator writes responses on flip charts under headings labeled “best” and “worst” public speaking practices.

Sharing Ideas: Group members are next asked to separate into pairs to generate ideas for giving a short three-minute practice speech. Partners are instructed to brainstorm ideas by taking turns sharing information with one another about what prompted them to join a CAT, what “outcomes” they hope the CAT will achieve and/or what skills or resources they would like to contribute to the effort. Each partner should be given 3 - 5 minutes to present his/her ideas. (Note: This activity can be omitted if the facilitator prefers to have group members give “spontaneous” presentations to the group, without prior rehearsal. Omitting the “rehearsal” step and encouraging participants to just speak about what they know gives participants the message that “everyone has something to contribute” and “you don’t have to be an expert to have important things to say about this issue.”)

Giving the Talk: Group members are asked to volunteer one-by-one to come to the front of the room, introduce themselves to the group and give a 3-minute talk about an aspect of violence prevention that is important to them. One of the group members can serve as time-keeper, holding up cards to cue the speaker when s/he has only 30 seconds left to talk. When the speaker is finished, s/he should not immediately sit back down. Rather, s/he remains standing while audience members give positive feedback on what impressed them most about the speaker’s talk. Group members should be instructed to focus their comments on the speaker’s **style of presentation** (not specific content) and to offer **only** positive comments (not advice about how to change or improve the performance). Practice speakers are usually so nervous that they are very likely to be overly-critical of their own performance unless treated gently with really appreciative comments from their practice audience. At the end of the exercise, the facilitators can ask for feedback from group members about how it felt to participate in the “Speaking Out” exercise.

Follow-up Brainstorm about Challenging and Difficult Situations: Following practice speeches, this exercise can be used to help CAT members work through their nervousness about speaking about their commitments in public. Participants brainstorm a list of difficult and challenging situations that might arise when they are giving a public presentation out in the community — such as having to deal with a “heckler,” respond to questions about women who batter men or comment on a news article they haven’t read, etc. Group members discuss possible responses to each of the difficult and challenging situations listed, then pick three or four situations to role play. The facilitator asks the whole group for feedback and suggestions at the end of each role play.

