

One Foot Forward

A GIPA Training Toolkit

*Designed by and
for People Living
with HIV/AIDS*

MODULE

3

..... LEADERSHIP

CANADIAN
AIDS
SOCIETY



SOCIÉTÉ
CANADIENNE
DU SIDA



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Working together for a healthier world™

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In this module, we'll talk about leadership – what it means to be a leader; how you might influence your community without being manipulative; the different ways you lead; and offer some information on working with groups.

“To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and it is necessary to follow, in order to lead.”

– William Hazlitt

ME?

Yes, YOU.

Welcome to the World of LEADERSHIP!

You now have a bull's eye painted on your forehead.

“Why do I want to do this?” you may ask yourself.

“Am I crazy?” Perhaps.

“Am I a glutton for punishment?” Maybe.

“Am I concerned about my peers, other people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV/AIDS), and making things better for everyone?”

BINGO!

If you believe that PLWHIV/AIDS in your community need to be more involved in the decision-making process and in helping to develop and guide programs and services, then you're exactly where you ought to be.

Keep reading.

LEADING TO WHAT?

What does it mean to be a leader?

Definitions of “lead” are:

1. To go before or with to show the way; conduct or escort;
2. To conduct by holding and guiding;
3. To influence or induce; cause; and
4. To guide in direction, course, action, opinion.

The word “lead” comes from an Old English word meaning “to go” or “to travel.” Leading is viewed by many people as being out in front of the group, taking charge of things and being responsible for making things happen.

But if we look at leading as a process of guiding or influencing, then we can see it as not necessarily needing to be out in front, but more a concept of “traveling with.”

Leadership **IS**:

- listening;
- asking;
- responding;
- following;
- considering;
- guiding;
- mentoring; and
- respecting.

Leadership is **NOT**:

- manipulation;
- control;
- bullying;
- deceit or lying; and
- cheating.

Leadership is not so much about **making** things happen as it is about **helping** things to happen.

Leadership is about a presence, not a position.

And some of the best leaders are those who are quiet and listen.

Exercise

Put down this module, or pause the CD.

Sit comfortably, wherever you are.

Now, listen. Listen for one minute.

What did you hear?

What sounds were near you? A clock? Your breath?

What sounds were beyond those sounds? Traffic? Creaking in your house?

Learn to really listen. Try this exercise once each day. It only takes a minute and you can do it wherever you happen to be. Pay close attention to what you hear. That's what listening and hearing is about.

Assessing Your Community

Before you can start leading, you need to know your community and its needs.

Who is your community? Is it only PLWHIV/AIDS? Is it their loved ones too? Is it the street community? The business community? The gay community? Other non-profits? Different ethnic groups?

It gets complicated, doesn't it?

You need to explore and discover. A community is a mosaic, a lot of pieces all put together reflecting different ways in which people live, work and play together. The only thing that we all have in common is that we're unique.

What does "community" mean to you?

What needs and interests do you hear about from other PLWHIV/AIDS? Are those needs and interests being met? Is there a better way to meet needs and interests?

ONE FOOT FORWARD

Bring your thinking cap and imagination and seek out people. Ask them about their lives and their interests and listen carefully. This is when you'll learn about what the community needs most. Then, you can figure out what needs to happen in order to make positive changes.

Social Power

Some people have greater power than others. In North America, white men traditionally hold the most social power. Our society is patriarchal in structure – men lead the way.

But social power can be much more subtle. For instance, a social worker holds more power than the client. Where the majority is one gender, that majority will hold more social power. Where one ethnic group is the majority, that group will also hold more social power.

Recognizing that social power imbalances exist doesn't ease the pain of the imbalance. Shifting power imbalances is difficult work. People become used to the way things are and change is often met with resistance.

Talking about social power can start that shift.

INFLUENCING THE INFLUENCERS

Influence comes from a Latin word meaning "to flow in," like water.

When we want to influence things around us, we are being like water, moving with a flow, instead of smashing against.

Think about people you know who you consider to be influential.

What qualities do they have? Are they persuasive? Are they pushy? Are they convincing in the points they make?

We hear about politicians and people who are influential. Most often, we mean they are people who are good at persuading others to a different point of view – hopefully a good one that helps others.

But influencing can be perceived as being manipulative or turning things your way because you want it your way.

Manipulation, being deceitful to get your way, is never helpful. Even if you think your way is the best way.

If you want to be an influencer and not a manipulator, you have to be:

- clear about the facts and your intentions;
- honest with yourself about what you are trying to accomplish; and
- happy with whatever happens, even if it isn't what you had in mind.

It's not about YOU.

It's about US.

Knowing the facts means doing your homework and taking away the emotional side of the issue. The emotions are important, but they are not the broader picture. Leadership means being able to see the bigger issue.

You have to know what you're talking about and understand that others will most likely see things differently than you do. That's okay – it helps you sharpen your point, so to speak.

If you want to test your ideas about changes you'd like to see, find someone you trust and go over the issue with them. Talk to them about your thoughts and see what the response is. If they have questions about your ideas, that's great! It means you need to learn more to be able to answer those questions.

Never be afraid of questions. They help you learn.

Being honest with yourself is a reality check. "Why is this issue important to me? Is it only about me or are other people affected by the same issue?"

If it's just about you, then it isn't OUR issue – it's yours. And you need to deal with your issues by yourself. Self-advocacy is as important sometimes as working for others, but in the area of "leadership," it can't be just about you.

Be happy, regardless of the outcome. The only person you can really, truly change is you. You have no control over other people's reactions and responses. If the outcome isn't what you had hoped for, is it something you can live with? If the answer is yes, terrific! If the answer is no, ask yourself why you can't live with it and go back to the reality check.

WHAT you influence may not be as important as WHO you influence.

Example

You want to influence the direction of a program – let’s say a treatment discussion group. No one in the group is very happy. They suggest topics that don’t get covered and cover topics they don’t care about. You think the group is important, but you also believe that the staff person running the group isn’t really listening to the group.

Who do you talk to? The Executive Director?

No.

The Board of Directors?

No.

First, you talk to the person who runs the group, the staff person who isn’t listening. You need to influence that person somehow. Are they carrying out instructions from higher up? Are they unsure about how to make the changes people are seeking?

What can you do to help that person so that everyone will benefit?

Going straight to the Executive Director could make the staff person angry or defensive. It’s only useful seeing the ED if the staff person refuses to hear you.

Going to the board, if they are a governing board, won’t help because they don’t deal with day-to-day issues (you’ll learn more about different types of boards in a future module). It could also make the ED and the staff person angry. For a working board, there may be some minor benefit, but they are likely all involved in their own stuff. Going to the staff person or volunteer is the best plan.

Make sure you have the backing of members of the group. Do they want to see change?

If they do, get the facts together, get the list of changes together and talk with the staff person about those suggestions and why they are so important to the group.

Remember that it's about the group and not about you. The group – your peers and clients of the agency – needs this change to make the group more effective.

Effectiveness is something all agencies want. It looks good in reports, and it really is better for everyone.

In this example, you have been a leader by following the wishes of your peers. You have shown leadership by seeking the best solution for everyone.

BEING A LEADER AS A PERSON LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

There are many things that you as a person with HIV can do in your community. Discovering the avenues where potential for leadership exists is the tricky part.

You can:

- get on the board of directors of your agency;
- become an expert in a particular area of work (e.g., treatments, peer support, substance use);
- get on committees locally, provincially or even nationally (there's a lot of temporary work that needs to get done);
- be an advocate for issues experienced by people with HIV;
- be a public speaker for HIV issues in your area; and
- be willing to be interviewed about living with HIV by the media.

Deciding your focus is very important. Think about your strong and weak areas, your interests, hobbies and passions.

As a person seeking to lead, there are some things worth considering:

- A person willing to take the lead sometimes has a steep learning curve. Are you open to learning a lot in a short period of time?
- A person willing to advocate and speak up can be a target for criticism. Can you develop a thick skin?
- A person willing to take on responsibility is sometimes asked to take on more responsibility simply because they'll do the work that's needed. Can you learn to say, "Not right now," and look after yourself?
- A person willing to do public speaking or media work is openly positive in the community. How might that affect your family?

- A person seen as an expert can sometimes be seen as a know-it-all, aloof and not like everyone else.
- Sometimes you may not have the answers. Can you say, “I don’t know,” and be confident that it’s okay?
- Taking a leadership role can be stressful. Think about how you handle stress and how you can learn to manage stress.

The positive payoffs in deciding to take on responsibility are many:

- You’ll learn a lot.
- You’ll meet people.
- You’ll be involved and active.
- You’ll be contributing to improving your community and the lives of your peers.
- You’ll be helping your agency.
- You’ll gain confidence the more involved you become.
- You’ll feel good about yourself.

Step One

You’ll need to look around and see what’s available.

Ask staff people questions, meet with a board member, talk with your peers and think about your options.

Step Two

Put your name forward for the work.

For a board position, you may have to wait until the next Annual General Meeting or you may be appointed, if there are open seats.

For a volunteer program, you may have to wait until training starts.

If you’re interested in paid employment, you’ll have to keep your ears open for job postings and determine whether you have the skills for the position.

Step Three

Jump in!

The best way to learn a new skill is to get into it. You can read all you like, but until you’re into the work, you won’t know all the aspects that

will arise. Every group and program is different – culturally and in the way they do their work.

- Don't worry that you don't know it all – you'll never know everything.
- Don't wait until it's perfect – it'll never be perfect.
- Don't wait for someone to ask you – you'll be waiting a long, long time.

MENTORS AND MENTORING

A mentor is a person who can guide you and help you learn. Mentors do not find you – you must find them.

If you think you'd like a mentor, you'll need to do a lot of listening and watching. This is a relationship you are trying to develop with someone you respect and who respects you and your ability.

A mentor is not a person who will tell you what to do or not do – that's your job. A good mentor relates their experiences, provides you with suggestions and asks you questions that make you think.

A mentor will also challenge you. Being challenged to try new and different things, as well as difficult things, is a way to help you grow and develop. At some point, the mother bird pushes the babies out of the nest.

You can learn to fly and a mentor can help you spread those new wings.

Here are some things to think about.

Qualities you might admire:

- honesty;
- respectfulness;
- approachability;
- receptivity;
- attentiveness to people;
- humourousness;
- straightforwardness;
- cooperativeness;
- reliability;
- supportiveness; and
- forthcomingness.

ONE FOOT FORWARD

What qualities do you admire in a person (e.g., honesty, straightforwardness, etc.)?

What qualities do you admire in yourself?

What skills do you want to improve (e.g., computer skills, meeting organization skills, writing skills)?

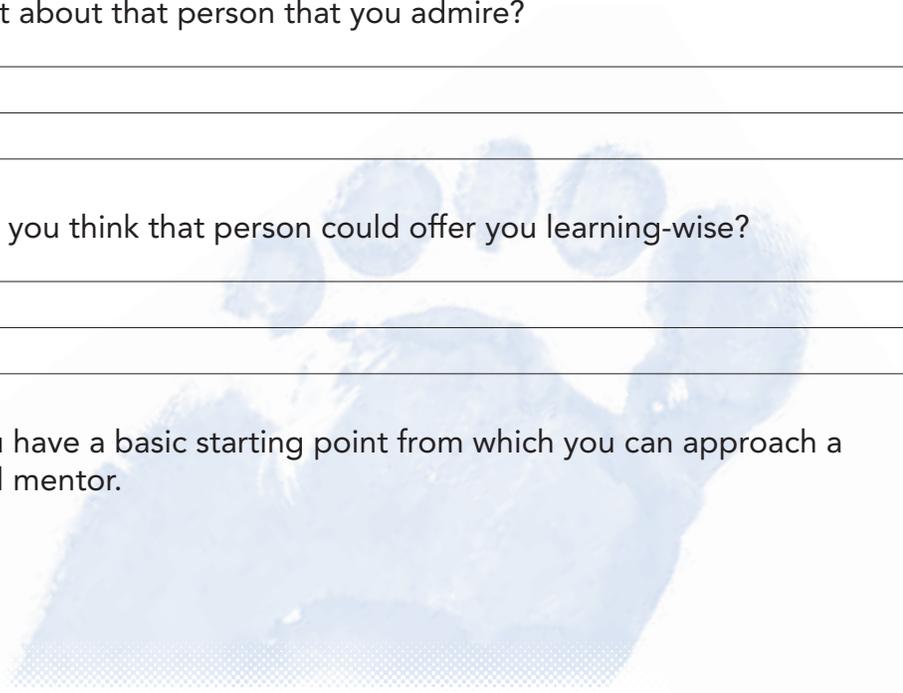
What new skills do you want to learn?

Who in your community, agency or peer group do you admire?

What is it about that person that you admire?

What do you think that person could offer you learning-wise?

Now you have a basic starting point from which you can approach a potential mentor.



Ask that person out for coffee and talk about what you'd like to be doing in your agency (e.g., serving on the board or volunteering). You can let them know that you'd like to "pick their brain" over issues and learn more about their opinions or their experiences in a certain area.

Don't be hurt if they can't offer you too much time, but do be persistent. It's very flattering when someone values our ideas and thoughts: we feel good about being able to help another person.

If you want to mentor someone, look around you. Is there a new person getting involved in the agency who you think has potential? You might want to talk to them about what they want to do and help them learn more to reach their own goals.

Remember, a person you look up to started exactly where you are now. They had to learn from others as they went along.

They also learned from their mistakes. Never be afraid to make mistakes – that's how we all learn.

EMPOWERING NEW LEADERS

This tool kit was primarily developed for people who are new to the work. But at some point, you will find yourself being approached by another new person to be a mentor.

When you're ready, you'll be able to assist others in gaining the skills they need and in developing their abilities so they can try new and challenging things. You'll be pushing your own babies out of the nest.

Make space for new people and new ideas – that's where we all start.

LIONS AND TIGERS AND GROUPS – OH, MY!

While you may prefer working on your own, at some point, it's likely that you will be working with a group. Whether it's a through a committee, the board, other volunteers, staff or your peers, groups are a way to bring together many minds to work on common issues.

Because groups are made up of different people with different ideas, they can sometimes feel intimidating or overwhelming.

Not to fear!

Most people in the group are probably feeling the same way you are.

Groups have a life cycle – they change and grow and sometimes die off. Within that life cycle, there are several common stages. These are the “forming, storming, norming” cycles.

Forming

This is the beginning of the group. People don’t know each other and there is a process of learning about the various personalities in the group. Some are outgoing, others are shy, some are thoughtful, others are passionate. It takes time for relationships to develop in groups. Hopefully, the group is around long enough for that process to unfold easily.

“Not even a great leader can get very far without great people to lead.”

– *Ashleigh Brilliant*

When a group is short-lived, such as a committee, there isn’t always time to develop relationships. In those groups, people are usually working on one or two tasks over a brief period. In that situation, you’ll need to jump in and get your feet wet! Don’t be afraid to offer opinions and thoughts – that’s why you’re there.

Storming

The second stage for group development is the “brainstorming” period. This is when people are involved in the work of the group. It may include discussion; it may involve planning or organizing. Whatever the work, this is when the particular strengths of the group members can shine.

All group members should be encouraged to use their particular abilities to advance the process and get the work done. Each person needs to be involved, which is not easy for shy, quiet people.

If you notice a person is not contributing, you can ask them what they think. Sometimes the quiet ones have brilliant ideas percolating in their minds. Asking them to speak up and to contribute makes sure that everyone at the table is involved.

In a teleconference or committee, it’s more difficult. Often people need to jump into the conversation to get their ideas out. Look for a break in the talking to make your point.

Norming

This is when the group settles into itself. People will feel more comfortable about their role in the group and a natural flow will start to happen. This works for longer term groups, but not always in short-term groups.

In short-term groups, there may not be time to get to this stage. But even on teleconferences, or with groups that have more than one or two meetings, there will probably be a time when people become comfortable with their own level of contribution and aware of how the others in the group like to be involved.

Ending

Ending a group is a period when people have the chance to reflect, not only on the group's work, but on their own work. It's important for a group to celebrate its successes and to recognize contributions of all group members, even in short-term groups and committees.

Hopefully, you will leave a group process feeling good about what you've done and comfortable with your involvement. Others should feel good too.

TO TALK OR NOT TO TALK

Basic Communication Skills

Communication is 20% verbal and 80% non-verbal.

That means that most of what we learn through communication is expressed through what we see, not what we hear.

Body language is what our faces, hands, torsos, legs and feet are doing while we are talking or listening. We can learn to read some body language, but there are many variables that may cause us to misinterpret it.

Posture

Open posture: when a person is sitting or standing relaxed with their torso exposed – with no fidgeting. Legs may be crossed or uncrossed, but the arms are not covering the chest. An open posture usually shows that a person is paying attention and is present in the conversation.

Closed posture: when a person is sitting or standing and their torso is covered. Legs are usually crossed and the arms are crossed over the chest. Usually, this means a person is feeling defensive, or is otherwise not open to the conversation, for any number of reasons. But, the person may have cold hands and may be keeping them warm.

Fidgeting: when a person is moving their feet, hands or fingers during a conversation, or even playing with a pen or biting nails. It could indicate that the person is nervous or not interested in the discussion. But, a person may rub their chin as they are thinking.

Listening

If you want to be a good communicator, learn to listen. Listening is not easy; it takes focus. You must be completely involved in what the other person is telling you. That means quieting the many voices that go on in your head.

Think about a movie or TV show you really like, or a book you got totally lost in. When you watched that show or read that book, what happened for you? You managed to pay attention and keep the distractions away. If you really want to listen to another person, you can try to think about listening to them in the same way – completely lost and fascinated by their story.

When you're listening, sit comfortably in an open posture with your torso exposed, legs crossed or uncrossed. You can lean forward a little, which puts you even more into the conversation. If you notice your arms folding over your chest, quickly survey your mind. Am I losing interest or losing focus? Be purposeful and try to keep your arms open. You'll find you actually hear better! And put down any distractions, like pens or papers. This will help your whole body be involved in the process.

As you listen to someone, try to acknowledge what you're hearing. You can do this by nodding in understanding, saying "Uh-huh" and by leaning in to get closer to the person talking. Do anything that lets the person know you are paying attention. It may take practice at first, but eventually, letting another know that you are listening carefully will become an easy habit.

Questions

There are two types of questions:

Open: any question that asks a person to offer information.

Example: What do you think about...?

Closed: any question that will get you a one-word response.

Example: Do you like broccoli?

We use questions to get information. Open questions encourage exploration of a topic, while closed questions encourage others to be direct and to the point.

Another phrase that's helpful in getting information is, "Tell me about..." It makes room for the person to tell us a story about their thoughts, feelings and ideas. But be prepared to listen! Don't get involved in a conversation or discussion when you are tired, not interested, or not able to be fully present for the person.

Reflective Language

When you want to verify with a person that you understand them clearly, you can use reflective language. Put in YOUR own words what you've heard and what it means to you.

Example: "I heard you saying that you liked the meeting this morning, but that it seemed a little too long."

This allows the person to confirm or correct you and helps to clarify what you're hearing.

Don't "parrot" the person, repeating exactly what was just said. Put it in your own words.

This is not a skill learned overnight. You need to practice it over time.

Congruence

When you compare words and body language, you can determine congruence. Are you hearing the same thing you're seeing? If a person tells you they feel wonderful, but they look depressed, with their eyebrows knitted, there is a contradiction. It's okay to check it out with them. "Are you sure you're okay? You look concerned about something." This lets the person either confirm or correct. And we accept whatever answer we get.

If a person seems uncomfortable or distracted in the conversation, or if you are feeling uncomfortable, for any reason, don't feel bad about delaying the conversation to another time.

It's better to wait for another chance to talk than stick with it when you really aren't present or the other person seems distracted.

"Bad" Communication

There really isn't any bad communication. When we aren't talking, we are communicating that we don't want to be connected. However, abusive language is NOT okay, and if a person is verbally abusive, don't get mad – get out. Responding to abusive language with more abusive language is adding fuel to a fire. Don't fan the flames, just leave.

Silence

Silence, something North Americans are not comfortable with, can communicate disinterest, or it can be used as a way to simply "be" together. We don't have to fill up the airspace with talk.



MEETINGS

Meetings are useful for several purposes:

- relaying information;
- learning new information;
- developing plans together; and
- making sure that action is taking place.

Meeting for the sake of meeting can feel like a waste of time and energy.

When we plan meetings, we need to think about several things to make them useful:

1. What are we meeting for? - The purpose.
2. Who needs to be there? - The people.
3. What will be the result of the meeting? - The plan.

It's always good to create an agenda for meetings. Agendas help people remain focussed on the issues at hand. They are maps for the meeting that list topics for discussion and debate.

Sometimes, each item is given a specific amount of time to be covered, especially when planning and implementing actions are involved. At other times, agendas are open to allow for more discussion.

You can create an agenda at the start of the meeting, if everyone agrees to it, but it's important that an agenda be followed once it's set, otherwise the group can drift and get off track.

Do your best to keep to the agenda. Be alert to side-tracking and don't be afraid to point it out tactfully when it occurs. Everyone has the shared responsibility for keeping things on track, not just the facilitator.

If you are responsible for contacting people for the meeting, make sure you have the correct information for everyone who should attend. Most people use email these days, but phoning may be needed to invite others.

Providing a meeting reminder a couple of days before the meeting is helpful too.

No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself, or to get all the credit for doing it.

– Andrew Carnegie

ONE FOOT FORWARD

Facilitating a meeting means assisting people to move through the agenda and helping to keep things on track.

Facilitate means to make easy. Facilitators don't lead a meeting, they guide it in moving forward.

When you're facilitating a meeting you need to know:

- the agenda for the meeting;
- the amount of time for the meeting;
- who's going to be attending the meeting; and
- outcomes that are expected from the meeting.

Your job as facilitator is to keep things moving.

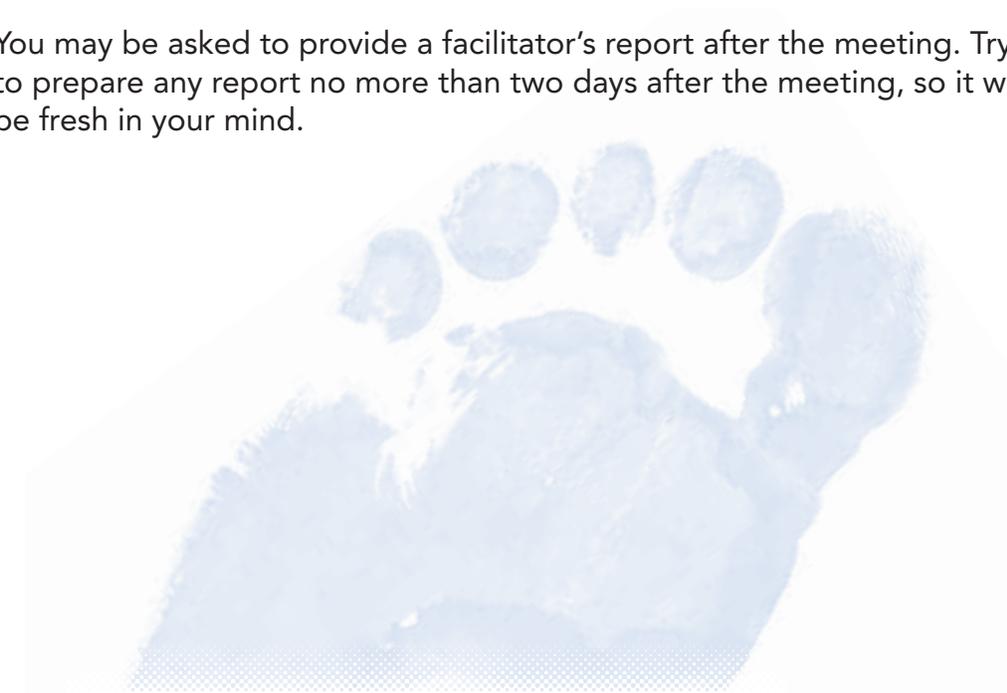
Every group has members who are outgoing and contribute a lot. Other members may be quiet and not contribute as much. The latter need to be encouraged to contribute. Simply ask them for their ideas.

If you are facilitating a large meeting, you may need to keep a speakers' list. Ask people to raise their hand if they want to speak and note their names in sequence. This helps keep some order.

If you start to hear repeated points of information, you can ask the group if there is anything new to add. It's okay as facilitator to suggest that the group make a decision or move to the next agenda item.

It's often appropriate to keep a record of the meeting's decisions and outcomes in the form of minutes. Make sure someone is appointed by the group to record the minutes.

You may be asked to provide a facilitator's report after the meeting. Try to prepare any report no more than two days after the meeting, so it will be fresh in your mind.



POLITICIANS AND THE POLITICS OF POLITICIANS

If you want to meet with a politician, there are important things to remember:

- Politicians are very busy and are asked to meet with many people.
- Meetings with politicians must have a very clear purpose.
- Politicians hate surprises, so make sure they have lots of information before you meet.

Most importantly, politicians are PEOPLE – they have feelings, ideas and opinions, just like you do. Here are some points that we will cover with regards to meeting politicians:

- scheduling and preparing for the meeting;
- public speaking (options, lived experience, etc.); and
- finding allies/building relationships.

You can prepare a “brief” for a meeting with a politician. A brief outlines the information you want to discuss and all the facts, statistics and background that will help the meeting move along.

Some briefs can be long with lots of information, but covering the key points will probably be enough. Providing too much information will turn people, including politicians, off.

When you call or write a letter to request a meeting with a politician, you’ll probably talk to an assistant. Respectfully explain why you’d like to meet with the politician.

Be understanding, recognizing that politicians don’t have a lot of time to meet, but that they’re interested in the concerns of their constituents. Ask for only as much time as you think you need. A half hour meeting might not seem like much, but it will “get your foot in the door” and may lead to future meetings.

When you meet, keep your message clear and to the point.

Allow the politician to ask you questions about the issues.

Be prepared to say, “I don’t know,” if you don’t know (it’s okay – politicians don’t know everything either). You can always forward them the information later.

If you have a specific request of the politician, don't make it AT the meeting. Again – no surprises – make sure the person knows the request well before the meeting.

Thank the politician for meeting with you – they'll appreciate it and it shows respect. If you want, you can ask for a meeting in the future to continue the discussion.

And if the politician sees you as a resource for information about an issue of importance, they may keep in touch with you.

It's a good idea to follow up on your meeting with a letter or an email summarizing the discussions, including areas of agreement and disagreement and listing any further actions that need to be taken.

SPEAKING UP!

This module will not give you all the techniques of public speaking, but if you are interested in that, there are options you can explore.

Most agencies have a "speakers' bureau". This is a group of people that provides speaking engagements for the Society on various topics (e.g., AIDS 101 and poverty and AIDS).

It is important that PLWHIV/AIDS talk about their lives and experiences. From a lived experience, the audience can learn a lot more about living with HIV than they can from books, videos or speakers who are not living with HIV.

Sharing experiences can be very powerful – and scary – for people. But, it can also be very gratifying. There's no way to know how an audience will respond, which can be exciting, but if people in attendance have negative opinions about people with HIV, it can be a challenge.

If you are going to do a talk, find out these things:

- What's the topic?
- Who is the audience?
- How long do you talk for?
- What are the learning goals?

You also need to think about your presentation:

- Do I need special equipment?
 - Video/DVD player, flip charts, PowerPoint, etc.
- What is my outline?
 - This is the agenda you create for yourself.
 - Think about it like a story: there is a beginning, middle and end.
- Do I want to include dramatic effect?
 - Maybe there are games or exercises to make the talk more interesting. You may not talk about your sero-status until the very end. That takes the audience by surprise and often moves them deeply.
- Will I use evaluations?
 - Quick and easy evaluation forms with only a few questions can give you a good idea of how you did and where you can improve.
 - Never look at negative comments in a bad way. They help us grow and improve our presentations.

And don't be afraid to take risks! Try something new if you have an idea. It may work well and it may flop, but you never know unless you try.

ALLIES, FRIENDS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

When we think about a leadership role, we need to think about relationship.

Allies are people who can help us and who we can help. You'll know allies when you meet them: they share the same philosophy, ideas and strive for the same purpose.

Allies aren't to be used. Like we said at the beginning of this module, genuine leaders don't manipulate for their own goals.

Developing relationships takes time. The more you get to know the group you're working with, the more you will recognize the most supportive people, as well as those you may not be able to work with.

"I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people."

– Indira Gandhi

ONE FOOT FORWARD

We won't always like everyone and everyone won't always like us. That's okay – it's part of being human.

Rather than dwelling on relationships that don't work, invest your time and energy in those that are useful.

Go for coffee.

Go for a walk.

Invite them over for supper.

The best ideas and relationships connect people through the simplest things.

Just get connected.

SELF CARE

Self care is the most important aspect of our work and the one we pay the least attention to.

Self care means being kind to ourselves and making sure that we remain healthy in mind, soul and body. We all have our own way to take care of ourselves; the most important thing is that we DO IT.

No one wants to burn out and no one wants you to burn out. Burn out simply means we are completely worn out and used up. We have no energy to do the work and we can even lose interest in the things that make us feel good.

Avoiding burn out means paying attention to yourself: your body, your mind, your emotions and your spirit.

Everyone experiences burn out differently, but some common warning signs include:

- memory loss – “Oops, did I forget to do that?”
- irritability – “Get off my case and shut up!”
- crying – because you're exhausted
- fatigue – all the time, not just after running a marathon
- lack of interest in fun stuff – “Maybe later...”

- lack of emotional feelings – numbness
- lack of sleep – “Just ten more minutes on snooze...”
- lack of concentration – “What was I doing and why was I doing it?”

If your gut is telling you that you’re doing too much, listen to it! We have gut reactions and often dismiss them. Pay attention to YOU and you’ll get the messages that you need to know when to slow down or pull back.

And be honest with others about how you’re doing. It’s much better to be up front about your ability than to be a good soldier and keep going until you drop.

How do you care for yourself?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> walk my dog | <input type="checkbox"/> pray, meditate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> listen to music | <input type="checkbox"/> play music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cook good food | <input type="checkbox"/> paint, draw, make art |
| <input type="checkbox"/> play with my children | <input type="checkbox"/> rearrange my furniture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> go for a run | <input type="checkbox"/> play on the computer
(internet, games, etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work out at the gym | <input type="checkbox"/> go dancing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> read | <input type="checkbox"/> go shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> have coffee with friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> practice yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> chat on the phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> go to the movies | |

Can you add to this list?

As long as you are doing something for yourself that feels good for you, it’s a good thing.

Every day, try to have some time for yourself. It’s not selfish, it’s self-preservation. There’s no agency or work on the planet that is more important than YOU.

And if you don’t look after yourself, who will?

TERMS IN THIS MODULE

Agenda: From a Latin word meaning “that which is to be done,” agendas keep meetings focussed on the work to be accomplished. It is usually a list of items that need to be covered.

Board of Directors: The group of volunteers in an agency that provides leadership to the agency and ensures it is operating in an accountable way.

Committee: A group that meets to do particular work, which is often, but not always, associated with the work of the board. Committees are discussed more in the Boards and Governance module.

Executive Director: The most common lead staff person in an agency, who is also often referred to as the “ED.”



SELF ASSESSMENT

After completing this module, I learned:

I still need more information about:

My strongest areas right now are:

My weakest areas right now are:

My next steps will be:

I can complete my next steps by: _____

Rate the statements below by circling the number that you think fits.

	Very confident			Need to work on this	
I spent enough time on this module.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm using my energy wisely.	1	2	3	4	5
I know where to find more information.	1	2	3	4	5
I can find a person to help me out.	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to apply what I learned.	1	2	3	4	5

