

# Tips for Facilitating Dibble Programs with Small Groups or Individuals

Delivering a Dibble program in a small group or one-on-one setting is a unique opportunity to go deeper with participants. This more intimate format invites honest conversation, personal reflection, and a stronger facilitator-participant connection. The tips below will help you adapt the program effectively for these settings.

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## Preparing Your Space

**Arrange seating to invite conversation.** A circle or round table signals equality and openness. Avoid setups that feel like a classroom or interview. Consider holding sessions outdoors from time to time — a garden or nearby park can create a sense of calm that benefits both participants and facilitators. Visit the space in advance to make sure it has comfortable seating and minimal distractions.

**Sit among participants when facilitating.** Positioning yourself as part of the group, rather than at the front of the room, builds trust, reduces hierarchy, and communicates that everyone in the space is a learner.

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## Selecting and Preparing Your Facilitator

**Choose facilitators with relevant experience.** Look for people who are comfortable with one-on-one and small-group dynamics and can engage young people personally, not just present information. Strong facilitators listen as much as they speak.

**Know the content well before you teach it.** In small settings, reading directly from the Instructor's Manual can feel flat. Participants respond better to natural conversation, thoughtful questions, and personal reflection. Facilitators should be deeply familiar with the content so they can teach it in a conversational way and respond to where participants are in the moment.

**Model self-regulation throughout.** Some topics in Dibble programs can be heavy, and facilitating in a small group may increase this sense. Build in brief moments for reflection and self-regulation — breathing, grounding, pausing — especially during difficult discussions. This benefits everyone in the room, including you.

**Demonstrate healthy relationships.** Offer participants kindness, acceptance, and warmth. Express genuine appreciation to your participants and partners.

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## Structuring Your Sessions

**Aim for at least three participants when possible.** A group of three or more brings a diversity of experiences and perspectives that enrich discussions. When participants hear viewpoints different from their own, it naturally encourages them to consider new ways of thinking and relating. When a one-to-one setting is your only option, lean in to the focused connection – individual sessions may allow for more personalized conversation.

**Plan to cover two lessons per session.** Small group conversations tend to move faster than large-group formats because discussions are more focused and there's less time spent on logistics. Covering two lessons per session allows you to complete all 13 lessons across seven sessions while keeping momentum.

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## Delivering the Content

**Use the PowerPoint slides as your primary teaching tool.** For very small groups, load the slides on a tablet for easy sharing. Consider printing slides with the facilitator notes visible so teaching prompts are readily available without flipping between documents. Printing three slides per page also gives participants something to follow along with and write on during the discussion.

**Anchor discussions in participants' own experiences.** The journals give participants space to process thoughts privately before sharing. Use journal reflections as the starting point for conversation. When participants connect the material to their own lives, the content feels more relevant and meaningful.

**Share your own experiences.** As appropriate, make the content your own by adding short examples from your experience. You may share how you have used the information in your own life or your reaction to learning it for the first time. Keep personal examples brief and purposeful – the goal is to connect the content with life experiences, not to shift focus to your own story.

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## Supporting Participant Engagement

**Offer meaningful incentives.** Participation and completion incentives can make a significant difference. You may want to ask what would be meaningful to them and tailor incentives to what your participants enjoy or items they may need— Gift cards, food, and clothing are always favorites. For youth who are parenting, offering baby items, parenting resources, or family outings are all additional strong options.

**Keep a community resource guide on hand.** Participants may share needs during sessions that go beyond what Dibble programs cover, such as food insecurity, medical care, employment, domestic violence support, and more. Maintaining a list of trusted community partners means *you* can connect them to help right away rather than asking them to search for resources on their own.

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