

16

Tips for trainers: leadership circles

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- **Objective**

To generate discussion about what leadership is, can be, and should be; to identify positive and negative aspects of leadership; and to establish group norms about leadership.

- **Time**

20 - 30 minutes

- **Procedure**

1. Ask the group to form circles of about 6 - 8 people, looking inwards and holding hands (if culturally acceptable).
2. Tell them that when they close their eyes, you will walk around the circles and tap someone in each circle on his or her shoulder. They are not to tell each other whether they have been tapped or not. After they open their eyes, the person who was tapped on the shoulder acts out the role of leader, and the rest act as followers. At the same time they should try to guess who the leader is by observing each other's behaviour.
3. In round one, after walking around the circles several times, you should have tapped everyone on his or her shoulder (ie. everyone should be trying to act as a leader).
4. Allow them to act out their roles for about 5 minutes, ensuring that no-one starts guessing out loud who the leader is.
5. Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 a second time. This time, do not tap anybody on the shoulder (ie. no-one should be acting as a leader).
6. After both rounds have been played ask them to sit down in their circle. Explain that when you count to three you want them to point to the person in the circle who they think was the leader in the first round.
7. Count to three. Most people should be pointing to someone. Go around each circle and ask them what it was about the person's behaviour that made them a leader. If you have enough time, write down different aspects of leadership on a flipchart.
8. Repeat step 7, but this time asking them to point to the person who they think was the leader in the second round.
9. Debrief thoroughly about aspects of leadership, and also how it felt to be a leader with no followers, or a follower.

- **Comments**

It is important that people don't start guessing out loud and that they really don't know who you have or have not been tapping.

Source: Adrian Jackson, pers. comm.