

## ***Small Group Facilitator Pearls:***

### **Key Steps to Successful Small Group Facilitation:**

- Set group **ground rules**
- Establish a **safe space** for all to contribute
- **Avoid dominating** discussion as the facilitator, use **open-ended questions**, elicit opinions and facilitate discussion rather than giving the 'answers'
- **Close** the group after each session
  - Elicit take-home points

### **Facilitating Challenges:**

#### **Timid student:**

- Use **individual reflection & pair shares** to allow students time to develop thoughts before contributing to the group
- Use **general questions** rather than specific, fact-based Q's
  - What are your thoughts on this?
  - How are you putting things together at this point?
  - What stands out to you as un-answered?
  - What are some next steps we should consider?
  - Is there anything you'd add to our thinking at this point?

#### **Dominating student:**

- Suggest **step-up & step-back**: offer your idea, then step back to hear the group's reaction, rather than explicating
- What do others think of this idea?
- Let's see what ideas the group has about this.

#### **Student seeking the facilitator's 'answers' to questions:**

- That is a good question. **Can other folks** in the group talk to us about why might this be important?
- I don't know that there's one right answer. Let's think as group about whether to include that detail in the one-liner, and how including it vs. not including it will impact our thinking about this case. **For those who chose not to include that detail**, can you tell us a bit about why you made that decision?

#### **Student taking the group on a tangent:**

- Let's **take a step back**, what do you think is the most important thing about this patient's presentation?
- Let's **re-focus**, we're very interested in Mr. X's family history, but what other elements of the history do we need to consider to move forward?
- This is a great discussion, but **let's take a time-out** to check our time and see what our remaining goals are to be sure we're able to meet all of our objectives.

### **Open-Ended Questions to Elicit Students' Thought Process:**

- **Expanding**
  - Pneumonia is a great thought, are there any other diagnoses that are linked in your mind with pneumonia that we should consider here?
  - How would you approach expanding out from pneumonia? (i.e. systems based approach, organ based approach)
  - How else might we approach prioritizing this problem list?
  - How would our thinking about this patient change if we included his international travel in our problem representation?
- **Clarifying**
  - Can you tell us what you mean by orthopnea?
  - How are odynophagia and dysphagia different?
- **Explaining**
  - Why do you think this detail in the history is particularly important?
  - Tell us about your decision to list a peptic ulcer as your most likely diagnosis.
- **Defending**
  - Can you defend why you think it is important to include the detail of fever in your problem representation?
- **Hypothesizing**
  - How do you think heart failure would lead to crackles in the lungs?
- **Compare/Contrast**
  - X team chose to include our patient's smoking history, while Y team left that detail out – how does that decision impact your diagnostic thinking?
- **Other**
  - **Can you process this problem further into more medical terms?**
  - **How else might we** approach brainstorming a differential diagnosis?
  - **How are you approaching** this person with chest pain?
  - **Can someone share a framework** for anemia?
  - Can we think of **pros and cons** of including this detail from our patient's social history in our problem representation?
  - To play the **devil's advocate**, when I hear the detail about sexual history included in the problem representation, it leads me to think immediately about sexually transmitted infections. Are there any downsides to that?
  - Let's **challenge our assumptions**, what if this 40 year old patient actually had a family history of early onset heart disease?

**You may also find this brief video on small group facilitation helpful:**

<https://vimeo.com/175402845>