

Learning Dynamics: Teaching in a Small Group

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Learning in a Small Group

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Goals of the session:

- Overview of the adult learning process
- Understand why to use Small Gp Teaching
- Describe strategies to use during sessions

The Adult Learning Process

Adult learners want:

- To help set the learning objectives
- To use what they learn right away
- To problem solve, not just learn facts
- Feedback, so they can evaluate their own progress

Adult Learning Process

Help set the

learning objectives →

Collaborative

Use what

they learn right away →

Clinically relevant

Problem solve →

Practical

Includes feedback →

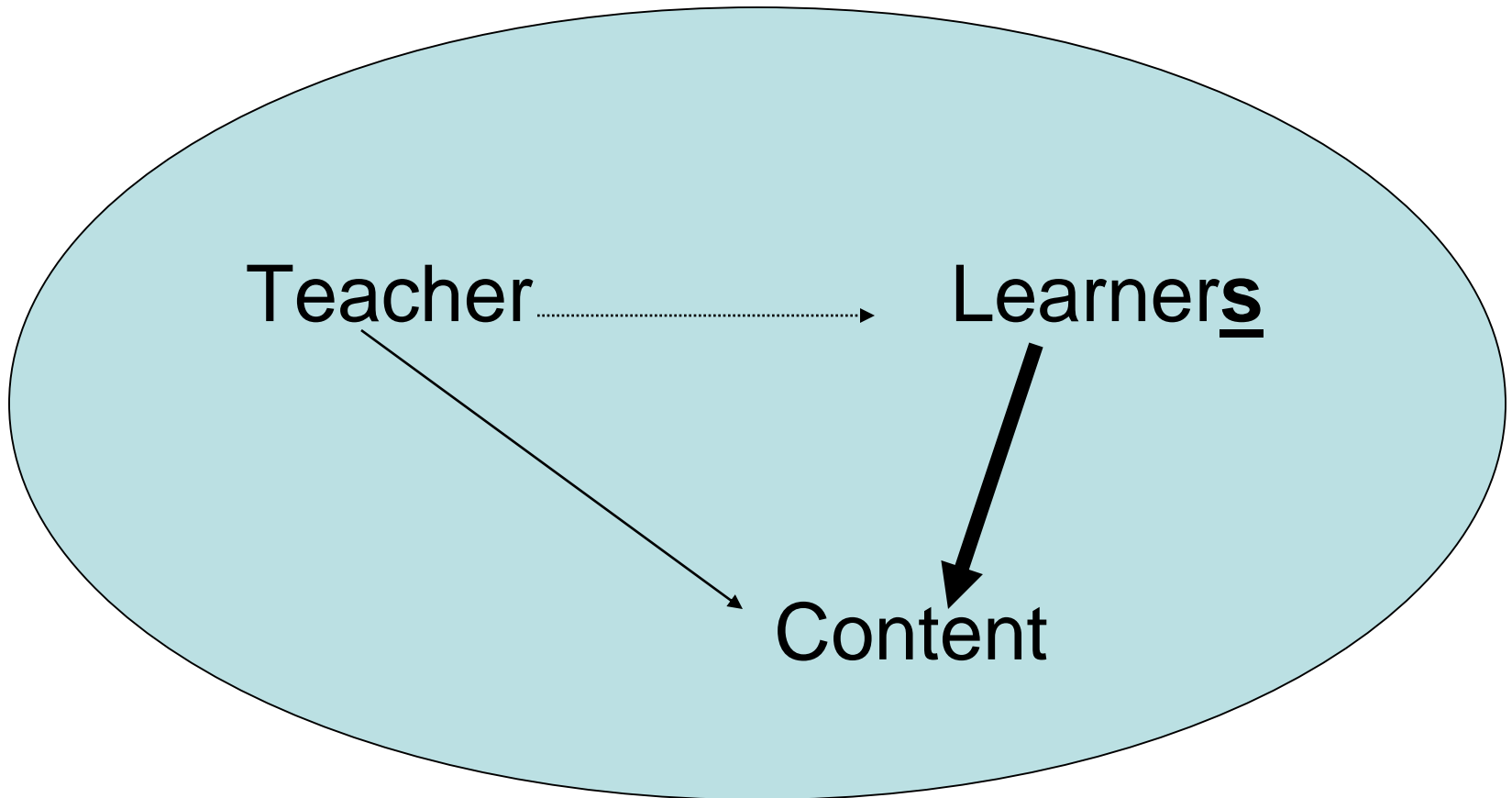
**Encourages self-
assessment**

Small Group Learning

- Origin: 1700s German research seminars and 1800s Oxford tutorials
- Defined by DIALOGUE and COLLABORATION= Student engagement

Small Group Session Dynamics:

Context



Small Group Learning:

- Promotes higher level of reflective thinking, problem solving, concept application, attitudinal change
- Collaborative, based on interaction
 - Between learners
 - Between teacher and learner
 - Between existing and new information

Small Group Learning

**Shared responsibility for
the learning process**

Small Group Learning

Shared responsibility for the learning process

**Teachers become learners,
too**

Small Group Learning

Shared responsibility for the learning process

Teachers become learners, too

Defined by the *process*

Small Group: Role of the Teacher

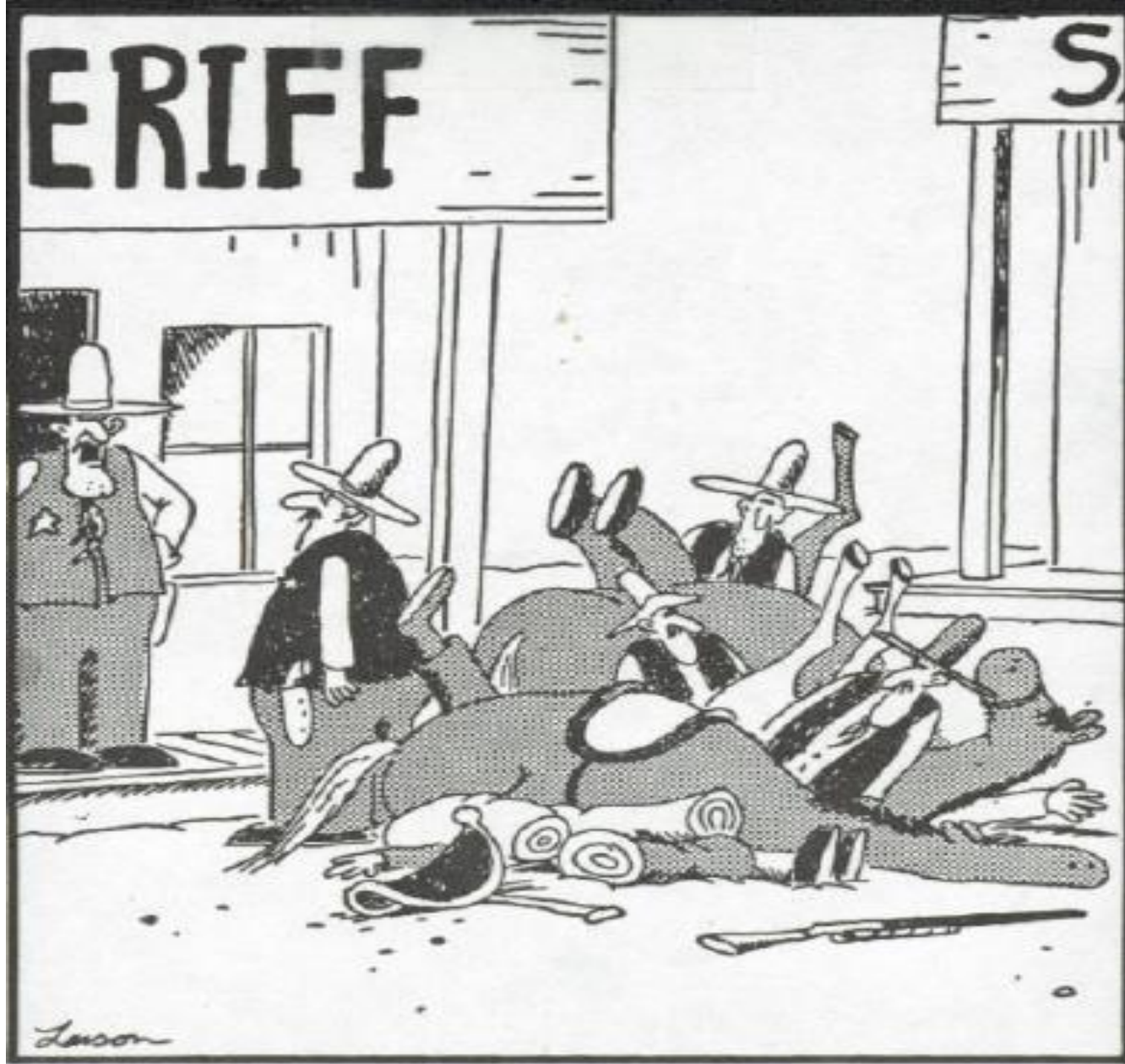
- **Coordinate** as much as Communicate
- **Facilitate**, rather than direct
- “**Scaffolding**” around which the learner organizes new information
- **Inspire** rather than inform

Small Group Opportunities:

- Assess the learner's needs and learning agenda
- Highlight misconceptions and individual knowledge gaps - *unlearning*
- Observe learner's reasoning skills
- Encourage self-assessment (metacognition)
- Model good question development
- Provide immediate feedback

Small Group Learning: Preparation

- Just show up and start a conversation?
- Balance of informality and academic rigor
- Informal and unstructured in order to work, but...



“And so you just threw everything together? ... Mathews, a posse is something you have to *organize*.”

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

Before you start...

Who?

What?

How?

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

- Who are your learners?
 - Motivation level?
 - Background knowledge?
 - What do they want to learn?

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

- What do you want to accomplish in the session?
 - “Need to know” vs “Nice to know”
 - What three points should they walk away with?

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

- **How** will you meet your teaching goals?
 - Techniques to use
 - Keep them involved
- **How** will you know that they are learning?

Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- Who are your learners?
- What do you want to accomplish in the session?
- What is challenges do you anticipate?
- How will you meet your teaching goals?
- How will you know that they are learning?

Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- Who?

- Chief Residents, experienced teachers; tired from sitting and listening to talks

- What?

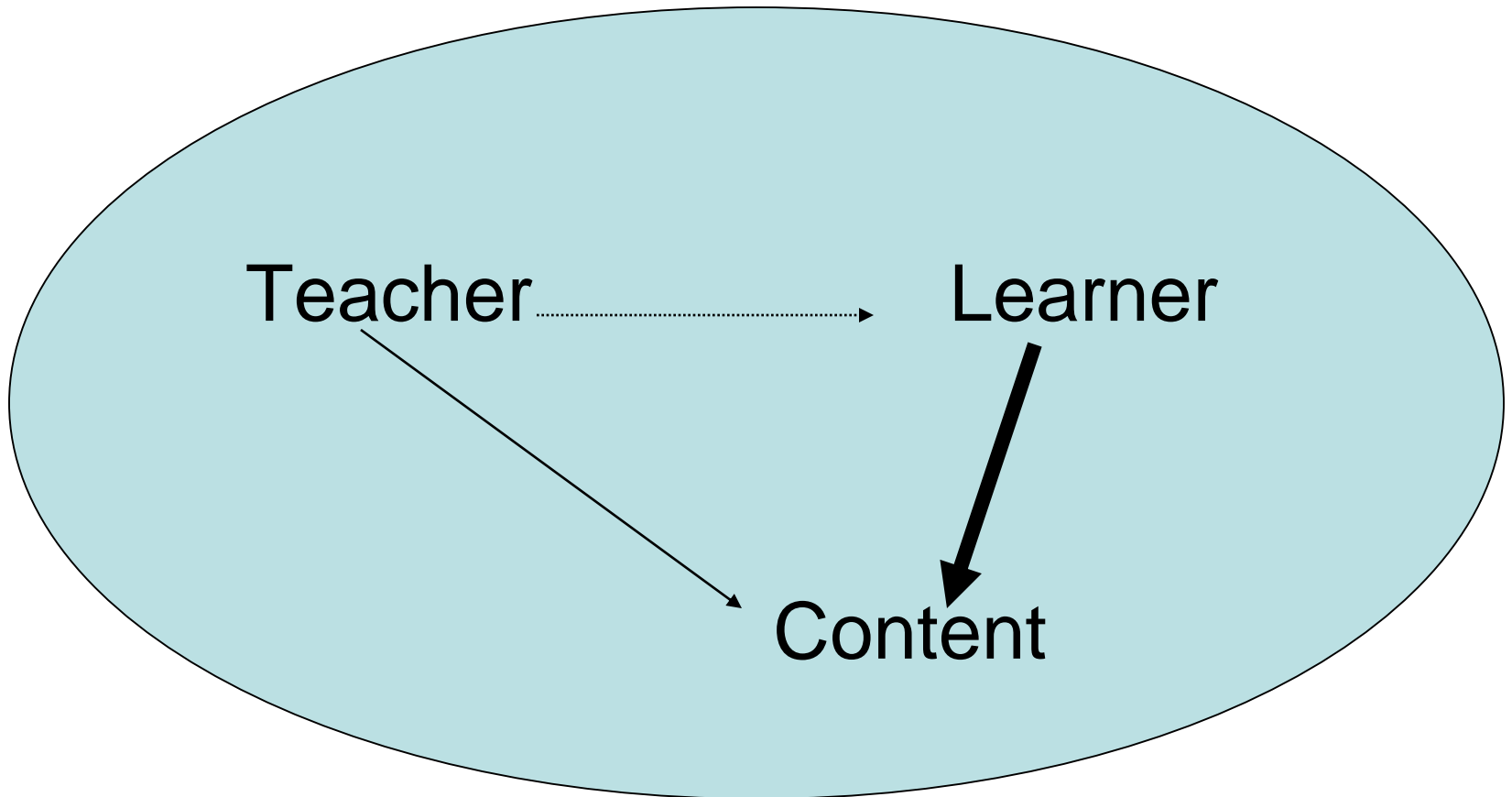
- Provide some specific, useful techniques, likely to be used, encourage experimentation

- How ?

- Interactive didactic, modeling some of the tips during the session
- Take home points on the 3x5 card

Small Group Teaching:

Context



Small Groups: Your Role

- prepare the general plan for the session
- set the tone for the session
- pay attention to the environment
- encourage participation
- keep the discussion on track
- time management
- help the learners prepare
- **If students are silent, it's your problem, not theirs**

Small Groups: Their Role

- The GOOGLER
- The Note Taker
- The Time Keeper

- Come prepared- pre-reading, case review, define questions, hot topics

- **Set high expectations: “You will learn something today”**

Adult Learning Process

- **Collaborative**
- **Clinically relevant**
- **Practical**
- **Encourages self-assessment**

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques

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Tips and Techniques:

- Know their names- and use them**

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Tips and Techniques:

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- **Learners should talk to each other**

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques:

- Know their names- and use them
- Learners should talk to each other
- **Count to 10**

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques:

- Know their names- and use them
- Learners should talk to each other
- Count to 10
- **The “Coffee Cup Technique”**

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques:

- Know their names- and use them
- Learners should talk to each other
- Count to 10
- The “Coffee Cup Technique”
- **3 x 5 cards**

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques:

- Know their names- and use them
- Learners should talk to each other
- Count to 10
- The “Coffee Cup Technique”
- 3 x 5 cards
- **Use summary statements for key points**

Small Group Learning: Running the Session

Using Questions as Teaching Tools:

Questions can:

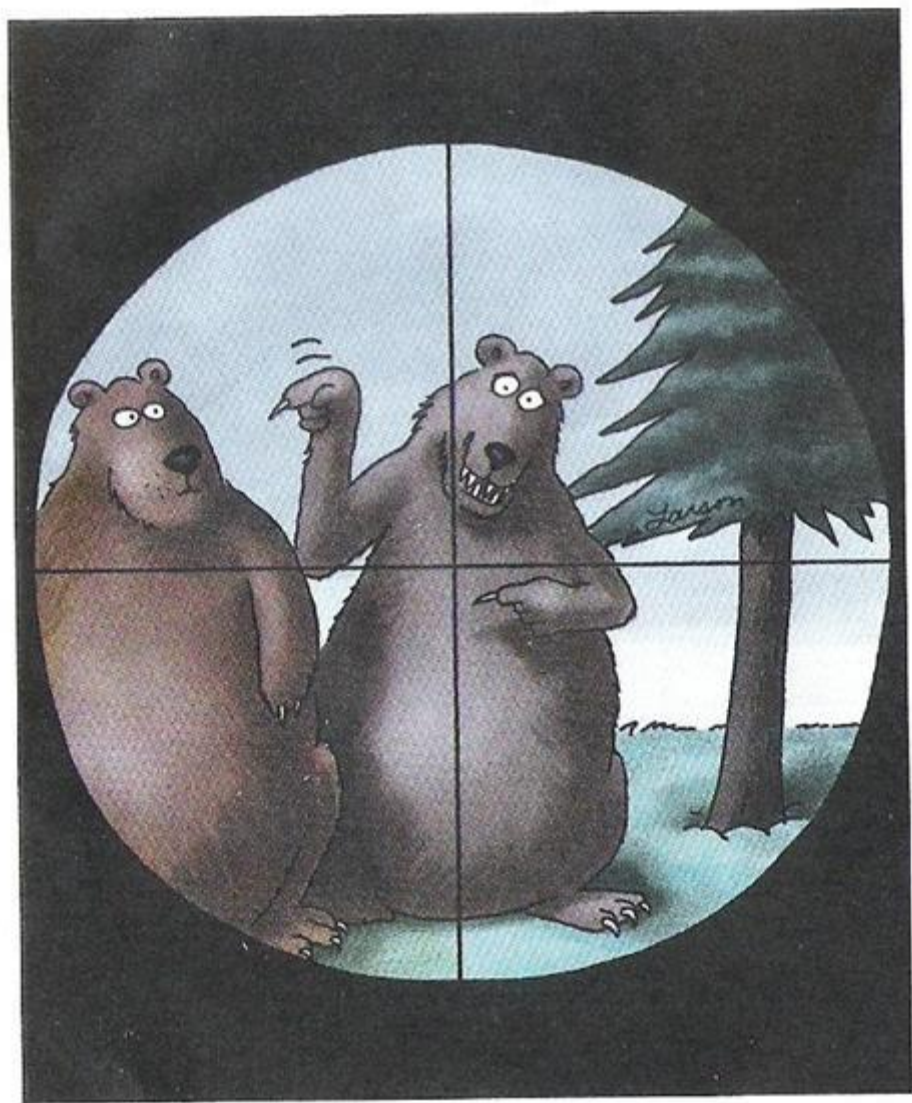
- Activate prior knowledge
- Explore misconceptions
- Reinforce accurate reasoning
- Promote additional insight
- **“Right answer” vs “Reasoning Skills”**

Small Group Learning: By asking questions you can...

- Assess learners knowledge level: “**NEED** to know?”
- Elicit their learning agenda: “**WANT** to know/”
- Promote active thinking
- Assess their understanding of what is being discussed: *Link new concepts with “real life” scenarios*

Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

“Pimping” vs “Teaching”



Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

- “Pimping” vs “Teaching”
 - Brancati JAMA 1989
 - Detsky JAMA 2009
- What is the “Socratic Method”?

Socrates used questions as teaching tools, not pimping...

Questions about unknowable “truth”

- Existing beliefs placed in question
- Confusion and Doubt
- CURIOSITY
- Search for further truth through discussion

Small Group: Types of Questions

- **Recall:** first level of interaction with the material
(list, name, report, define)
- **Analysis/ Synthesis:** demonstrate understanding
(compare, categorize, distinguish, design)
- **Application:** apply new concepts to a specific clinical setting
(interpret, apply, demonstrate, choose)

Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

**Ask about something that is
worth knowing**

What challenges have you
faced in small group teaching?

Small Group Learning: Challenges

- Group with learners with different knowledge levels
- The “Learner with Frontal Release”
- The “Know it All”
- The “Bored Learner”--“Sleeping Learner”
- The “Shy Learner”

Small Group Teaching: Challenges

- Unpredictability of the session- creativity and intellectual nimbleness
- Learner's needs and interests not predicted-tolerance of uncertainty
- Group dynamics - listening skills, power of observation
- “I don't know the answer” but still maintain a “Confident teaching persona”? – inspire vs impress

Small Group Teaching: When it's over-

- **Did they** learn?
- **What** did they learn?
- **Why** did they learn?

- What did **you** learn?

Suggestions

- **The Frontal Release Learner:**
 - “Can you link what you just said with the point that Timmy raised?”
 - “How do you know that, Jemima? Describe the evidence to support your point. Sam, what evidence would you need to substantiate Jemima’s assertion?”
 - “Can you state/describe that another way?”
 - “Dan, you heard what Jemima shared. What would change if XXX was YYY?”
- **The Bored Learner:**
 - “Mary, can you summarize the discussion so far? Where should we head next?”
 - Sigmund, what if the patient was withdrawing now? Would you suggest anything different?”
- **The Shy Learner:**
 - “Greg, would you keep time, and tell us
 - “We haven’t heard from everyone yet. Alex, do you have something to add? Then Joey next.”
- **The Know it All:**
 - “What evidence would you want Dan to present to support his statement, Angela, if you were going to convince someone else of that point?”
 - “Others may agree with you, Dan, but let’s take another look at the case. Jeffrey, argue the point from a different stance.”
- **The Talker:**
 - “Try waiting until 2-3 others have spoken, before speaking again”
 - “Before you go on, let’s see if someone else has an opinion on that.”
 - “For this group to be successful, everyone has to contribute. What could you do to help make that happen?”
 - “We seem to be going over the same ground all over again. Is that because we’ve run out of new ideas?”

Suggestions:

- Starting:
 - Set ground rules, even if you think they are obvious
 - Distribute roles
 - Clarify time, and establish milestones for the discussion
- Wrapping up:
 - “What are two of the most important ideas that have emerged from this discussion?”
 - “What do you understand better?”
 - “What questions remain for you? How are you going to find the answers?”
 - “What was confusing in the discussion today?”

Additional Resources:

1- **Teaching Toolkit: Large and Small Group Teaching:** helpful resources for teaching in large and small group, with descriptions of specific techniques to enhance learning through group interaction

www.ucd.ie/teaching

2- **Foundation For Critical Thinking:** Paul, R. and Elder, L. (April 1997)

www.criticalthinking.org

3- **The Socratic Method: Fostering Critical Thinking:** Discussion about the Socratic teaching method

teaching.colostate.edu/tips/tip.cfm?tipid=53

Small Group Learning: Keys to success

- 1) Plan ahead
 - 2) Pay attention to the **process**, not just the content
 - 3) Self-assessment: Learners AND teachers
- *) Experiment

Now, the 3x5 card...