DEVELOPING YOUR OWN FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After you have selected a clip(s) that you will use for a discussion, you'll want to develop a single focus question for your discussion. This question should be open-ended and focused on the clip that you have selected. Consider the following when developing your focus question:

- When you first view the clip, your initial reactions to the film can help you identify its key issues. Maybe you feel intensely sympathetic toward someone in the film, or you feel angered by a statement. Trust your responses. Consider motives of the individuals in the film or the filmmakers; consider moments that stand out as important to you and that resonate emotionally for you.
- View the clip a second time and turn your responses into questions about the film. Resist the impulse to teach your group a lesson with your questions or steer them to a conclusion.
- For each question, brainstorm potential answers and consider opposing views. When you can see the other side of the issue clearly, you can more effectively ensure that you are posing an open-ended, clip-focused question. Your effort here can be greatly aided by working with a partner, who might be able to see that other side more easily than if you were doing it alone.
- When finalizing the wording for your focus question, use simple and clear language. If you are asking a question about why someone says what they say in the film, use a direct quote, rather than paraphrasing.
- Try to make your question as specific to the film as possible, and avoid asking overly general questions. For example, refine the question “What is the relationship between Character X and Character Y?” to instead ask “Why does X tell Y...?”
- Remember, you are NOT trying to TEACH your group a lesson with your question, nor drive them to a conclusion you want them to make. You ARE trying to ASK your group a question that represents your sincere curiosity about something you saw or heard in the scene you select.

The more authentic you are about leading with your curiosity instead of an agenda, the more you encourage your group participants to do their own thinking. Leading with curiosity encourages your participants to authentically share their own ideas, do their own thinking, and pay greater attention to the ideas of other participants.

As a final step in preparation, try to identify two different moments in the clip you plan to discuss that can conceivably support two different responses to your opening question. This way, if your group gets stuck on one answer, you can direct them to consider an alternative and help deepen the consideration of the clip's full meaning.