

Facilitation Tips

Facilitation Strategies:

**Affirm People ~ Question Assumptions ~ Redirect Behaviors ~ Engage Bodies ~
Be Compassionate**

Good facilitation goes mostly unnoticed, it is about framing topics and asking questions that invite people into deeper examination and synthesis of a topic. Good facilitation is like care of meeting for worship – it is showing up early, setting the space, and holding a pure intention of openness and growth, with care for the things that can help make that happen.

Goals: Set clear goals. Everything you do in the workshop should connect directly to one or more of the goals. Use the goals as a way of keeping people on track. Ex. “That is a great point but it is not what we are talking about today. Can you add something to the topic we are talking about . . .”

Get-To-Know-You Exercises:

Start with a lower-risk exercise that gets people talking and interacting around the topic. Use questions that spark thinking, relate experiences, focus on the positive, and whose answers are generally easy to share with someone you may not know.

1) Two Lines: Have everyone line up (sitting or standing) facing one other person. Explain that you will put out a question and one side has 1 minute to answer the question while their partner just listens. Ring a bell at 1 minute and then have the other side answer. Ring the bell to stop people. Have each person move one space to the right, with the folks at the both ends switching over to the other line. This way, each pairing will be new for each question.

2) Quiz-Quiz-Trade: Print and cut out enough cards so that each person has a card with a question on it having something to do with the topic and getting to know each other. The questions should be open-ended and generally lower-risk. Everyone gets one question. Raise your hand to indicate that you need a partner. High-five your partner. A asks B their question and B answers. B asks A their question and A answers. A and B swap questions and look for new partners.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors:

- Listen to your body
- Be direct and clear
- Set boundaries consistent with your goals
- Address things when they come up
- Listen for the underlying need or issue & respond to that
- Ask questions & invite learning
- Use the wisdom of the group
- Use silence to deepen, reflect, and center; not to silence or shut down
- Name what you think is happening; ask others to name what they are seeing or experiencing
- Know your own triggers & how they show up

Triggers:

Triggers are phrases, actions, or moments that bring up past harms we have suffered in a way that our bodies experience as the *actual harm happening in that moment*. When we get triggered, our bodies go into flight, fight, or freeze mode. We cannot facilitate from this place and need to let someone else take over or call a break. If we suspect that someone in our group has been triggered, know that they are not able to process much in that moment and may or may not want support in coming back into the present fully. Things that help us process a triggering event:

- consciously breathing deeply and/or walking around
- going outside and touching the Earth or a tree or a rock
- drinking water
- moving into a safer space
- talking with someone we trust about what we are experiencing
- being alone
- listening to music
- getting to set the boundaries we need

It takes a minimum of 20 minutes for the flight-fight-freeze hormones to leave our system, and can be longer depending on what is being triggered. During this time, people should not be leading, should not be expected to engage in discussions, or otherwise be asked to process anything other than what they are experiencing.

Getting Unstuck:

If you get stuck, here are some strategies that can help:

- Ask people in the group to name a question they think would help the group move forward
- Get people into trios and each share a thought and a feeling they are having. Then ask folks to brainstorm a next step in their small groups and have each group share their best idea.
- Take a 15-minute break and ask everyone to move, go outside, or check in with someone and come back a one sentence description of why the group is stuck.
- Open a period of waiting worship and ask people to offer a prayer for the group.

Intervening in Microaggressions or Patterns of Oppression:

1. Interrupt kindly
2. Articulate the pattern that you are noticing or name the microaggression
3. Offer new framing/language that steers away from false assumptions
4. Invite the person you've interrupted to keep sharing - keep the conversation and interaction going
5. Pay attention to body language - check in with people targeted by the microaggression. Do they look upset, shut-down, disengaged? Make space for these check-ins separate from the larger group.
6. Invite the group to intervene if you do or say something that is harmful - model inviting feedback, accepting it, using it and making amends.

Closing: Close in a circle, do a short check-out, in trios have folks share a next step they are taking, offer some silence and a prayer, etc.