



## Unit 7

## Developing Facilitation Skills

### Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Distinguish facilitation from instruction and training
- ✓ Identify the competencies linked to effective small group facilitation
- ✓ Understand the difference between content and process
- ✓ Identify the stages of team development and ways to help teams through each stage
- ✓ Use common process tools to make meetings easier and more productive

## Unit 7

### Defining Your Role

#### Facilitation, Training, and Chairing

Like so many other things in our business life, meetings continue to evolve. When U.S. Army General Henry Martyn Robert was asked to chair some meetings in the 1870's, he looked at how chaotic they were. He felt that he did not understand enough about how they should take place, so he researched and drafted a set of rules called "**Robert's Rules of Order**" that were based loosely on parliamentary procedure. They have been adapted since that time and used in many workplaces and societies.

While many meetings are run by a chair (or chairperson, chairman, or chairwoman, depending on where you are), facilitated meetings are different. (We'll talk about how and why that is shortly.)

**Some people refer to any facilitated session as a workshop rather than a meeting**, with the idea that participants expect to work in a workshop, whereas they meet in a meeting. We are pretty comfortable with either term. As a facilitator, if you are invited to lead a session, see what works best for the group as you plan the program, choose a space, set a time, and consider what's available.

There are many definitions of facilitation, just as there are books and articles written about it.

**Facilitation means "to make easy,"** so the job of the facilitator is to create a meeting environment where work is made easier for the participants.

That's a pretty simple definition. Facilitation will have different applications and uses in different settings. Sometimes a facilitator is asked to moderate between parties who disagree (which is probably a role better suited to a **moderator**). Often, facilitators are asked to act as a process leader or group leader.

As a **process leader**, the facilitator manages the group process, which allows the participants to pay attention to the content of the work. This is a pretty traditional explanation of facilitation, where the facilitator guides the team through the agenda, focusing on the people involved, and remains detached from the content and the outcomes.

## Large Group Exercise

**Do you get asked to facilitate meetings or workshops?**

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**Do the people who ask you understand the difference between the terms, or do they use words like facilitation, training, instruction, and chairing interchangeably?**

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**Can you describe the similarities and differences between facilitation, training, and chairing?**

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## How Facilitators Work

### Key Skills

**A facilitator is** someone who helps a group to collaborate, work effectively, and to learn different ways of thinking about things. The facilitator does not take sides on an issue or share their point of view, since this might sway the results that the group achieves. An effective facilitator has excellent communication skills, as well as an advanced understanding of group dynamics, problem solving, consensus building, conflict resolution, and facilitation tools and processes.

**A facilitative individual is** someone who is easy to work with, a team player, and aware of individual and group dynamics. They may be leading facilitation, or they might be a part of a facilitated group. They are knowledgeable in the interpersonal skills of communication, collaborative problem solving and planning, consensus building, and conflict resolution. Some leaders approach their work and teams from a facilitative perspective, in contrast to someone who leads by directing.

**Facilitative behaviors and skills** are essential for anyone who expects to succeed in working collaboratively in groups or organizations today. Facilitative skills honor, enhance, and focus the wisdom and knowledge that is otherwise unexpressed in most groups. They are critical skills for developing what we have come to think of as the learning organization.

### Roles of a Facilitator

One big difference between training and facilitating is that facilitators are content neutral while being process advocates. Facilitators don't take sides, and they don't have a stake in the outcome. They are often an outsider or third party to the issues involved. (If not, they have to step to that outside role during facilitation.) The facilitator is there to help a group work through a process—a process that is fair, inclusive, and provides a space for every member of the group to participate fully.

Let's look at some roles and behaviors that can help a facilitator achieve this.

#### **The facilitator enables full involvement.**

When people get into a group, they often fall into predictable behaviors. Depending on how their ideas have been received in the past, they may hesitate to make their thoughts known, to take risks, or to consider things that could be done differently. They may not wish to contradict what they have heard from management, or to move outside their comfort zone. The facilitator has to understand this range of dynamics. They need to make sure that people get involved and that they can safely and openly express themselves.

In order to get people involved, a facilitator can use icebreakers and energizers, which help to ease tensions within the group. They can also use small group discussions that encourage safety and freedom to speak.

#### **The facilitator creates a respectful environment.**

If a group does not understand one another, or the purpose of the session, they will have a difficult time embracing processes and ideas. They may feel threatened and resort to defending their own ideas, territories, or perspectives. People really struggle to focus on someone else's ideas unless they feel that their own ideas are understood.

It falls to the facilitator to establish an environment of trust and safety. These environments are not simply established by definition: people must get to know one another, so facilitated sessions can be expected to take longer than a typical workshop or meeting.

To help create a respectful environment, the facilitator uses techniques like brainstorming, mind-mapping, mirroring, paraphrasing, and summarizing to promote understanding. Definitions for technical terms or industry jargon are shared to ensure that people reach understanding.

### **The facilitator builds sustainable agreements.**

The mainstay of facilitation is to create an environment where participants reach consensus and then create sustainable agreements. This means that the facilitator must be able to expose the group's ideas and then help them to consider, reconsider, and uncover new solutions as opposed to picking the "easy" one or the "right" one. If the group comes to agreement but they do not also have consensus (meaning that they all agree at least enough to support an idea), then the agreement will not be sustainable or enforceable. This means that any changes the group agrees on will not take place.

### **The facilitator teaches new thinking skills.**

The facilitator will use a variety of facilitation skills to help people evaluate solutions and analyze cause and effect. The facilitator can help participants have civilized disagreements and see how conflicts can be resolved by clear communication.

## Facilitation Skill Levels

Like many things, facilitation is a learned skill. It takes practice and experience to learn to remain neutral, keep track of multiple lines of thought and conversation, take accurate notes, and ask questions that stimulate thinking. Several teachers on facilitation break down the skill into four levels, which are shared below.

### Level One: Introductory

At this level, a facilitator is able to apply understanding of the idea of facilitation. They may be a facilitative leader already. The application of skills like active listening, questioning, and managing time is complemented by encouraging participation, keeping accurate notes, problem solving, and action planning.

### Level Two: Growing

Once you have some experience at gaining consensus within groups you work with, and you have seen the success of sustainable agreements and completed action plans, you continue to grow. At this stage, you will be:

- Understanding additional process tools that are well matched to the matters being considered
- Increasing your skill by using the most effective decision making and process tools
- Skillfully challenging assumptions
- Setting measureable goals
- Using surveys at the end of facilitation

### Level Three: Skilled

At this level, you are competently able to handle feedback and manage conflict (even to that state of agreeing to disagree, or simply having civilized disagreements). You can implement design changes, offer intervention, and apply your knowledge of the group's developmental stage to work toward consensus. You are able to use higher level tools, design your own surveys, and create comprehensive summaries and reports for members of the group and stakeholders.

### Level Four: Advanced

At this stage, you have had experience with many different groups and dynamics. You are able to facilitate for complex organizational issues, you use the full range of tools in the facilitator's toolkit, and the feedback from your sessions is that you are providing support and facilitating at a level with top facilitators.

## Facilitation at a Glance

Let's look at some things that you can do to ensure facilitation success.

### Before the Facilitation

- Check the meeting space and make sure it is appropriate for what's needed
- Conducts a needs assessment: what are the stakeholders looking for?
- Interview or survey members of the group if appropriate
- Draft the agenda and send it to participants
- Select activities and processes that will be appropriate for the group
- Select back-up processes that you can use depending on how things unfold

### To Start Facilitation

- Welcome participants
- Have members introduce themselves, especially if they don't know one another
- Use an appropriate icebreaker to set the environment
- Explain your role
- Clarify the goal of the session
- Introduce the agenda and make changes based on feedback; group acceptance is important here
- Establish ground rules (norms)
- Explain the process
- Set time frames
- Appoint a time keeper and a minute taker

## During Facilitation

- Ask, "How's this going?"
- Check the pace: too fast, too slow?
- Check whether the techniques are working
- Obtain and offer feedback as needed
- Ensure that all members are able to participate fully
- Summarize periodically and at end of session

## To End Facilitation

- Help members make a clear statement of what was decided
- Develop clear steps with dates and names
- Check the parking lot and any leftover items
- Help create next agenda
- Clarify follow-up process and accountabilities

## Establishing Ground Rules

Similar to any other meeting, a facilitated session needs some ground rules. The rules help participants understand what is expected, to focus on what's important, and to help the facilitator to keep things on track. There are several ways to establish ground rules (also referred to as **norms**).

| <b>Advantages Of Having The Group Establish Their Own Norms</b> | <b>Advantages Of Having The Facilitator Set The Norms</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
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**Generate a list of ground rules, or norms, for the remainder of this workshop.**

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One principle of facilitation is that if people don't participate in and own the solutions to the problems, or agree to the decisions made, implementation will be half-hearted at best, possibly misunderstood, and quite likely to fail. Another principle is the importance of being able to elicit, harness, and focus the vast intellectual capital (the good ideas) and goodwill that is within the members of the group.

This approach does several things. First, it emphasizes that the facilitator is on an equal level with the participants. It also encourages participants to solve the problem on their own, using tools provided by the facilitator. This helps the team grow together, and it also fosters an atmosphere of respect and trust — the sort of atmosphere that is conducive to successful meetings.

### Parking Lots

In addition to the ground rules, the facilitator can set up a parking lot at the beginning of the meeting. This is done simply by writing "parking lot" at the top of a flip chart page and hanging it up in the room. As the meeting unfolds, the facilitator may put questions that cannot be answered during the meeting on the sheet. Items that cannot be completed in time can also be posted here. Following the meeting, the facilitator must make sure that these questions are answered, or issues added to subsequent agendas in order for participants to realize that everything is being dealt with.

### Planning Transitions

A facilitator can typically be asked to facilitate more than one topic. A sign of a professional facilitator is to plan the transitions between different sections on the agenda. This can be done through comments or an activity. Once the group seems to have reached consensus or exhausted a topic, the facilitator can ask:

- Does anyone have anything else to add before we move on?
- Are we all ready to move on?
- Tim, did we address your concerns?
- Is everyone okay with the tasks and roles that were defined?

A five minute energizer activity or quick bathroom break can also make an effective transition.

## Content and Process

While facilitators are responsible for the process, it is participants who are responsible for and manage the content. Let's define those things now and see how this works in a facilitated meeting.

### What is content?

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### What is process?

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## Types of Thinking

### Divergent Thinking and Convergent Thinking

**In brief**, problem solving means coming up with a number of ideas for solving a problem or coming to resolution, and then selecting one of them and moving forward. While problem solving looks pretty simple on paper, in practice we know that it isn't.

**In theory**, we see a problem, generate a wide range of brilliant solutions, and then select the best possible one for the circumstances. Often, though, we are considering complex problems and circumstances. A facilitator can help the group to get beyond their normal experience with problem solving and to get more creative.

It can be hard for problem solvers to move from thinking about their own needs and desires to understanding other people's perspectives. Many challenging behaviors can surface in a problem solving session. Members may get frustrated, uncomfortable, or feel threatened. If the session is not well designed, people will be territorial, defensive, or push for closure before all issues have been discussed. People who are comfortable working in a group may try to influence the outcome by out-talking quieter members of the group.

At times, individual members of the group need to express their own points of view. At other times, they may want to narrow their differences and work toward closure. These two sets of processes are referred to as **divergent** thinking and **convergent** thinking.

#### Divergent Thinking

- Generating alternatives
- Open discussion
- Gathering diverse points of view
- Exploring the logic of a problem

#### Convergent Thinking

- Evaluating alternatives
- Summarizing key points
- Organizing ideas into categories
- Arriving at a general conclusion

### Divergent Thinking

Working beyond the limitations of conventional wisdom has become absolutely essential today as we tackle diverse problems in economically and technologically driven environments. Questions like how these are not easy to answer:

- How do public schools protect themselves against violence?
- What does an organization need to do to support the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce?
- How can companies be more environmentally friendly?

Even smaller issues, like reconsidering a dress code, can lead to plenty of heated debate.

If we have to find new ways to think about problems, we also need to reward creativity. Very often we don't appreciate creativity for what it can bring us. Let's explore an opportunity for this group to exercise their creativity.

## Convergent Thinking

Here is where you consider an entire list of ideas and put your convergent thinking skills into action. You evaluate alternatives, summarize key points, sort ideas into categories, and arrive at a general conclusion.

## Grey Matters

We just get frustrated and impatient when people put forward ideas that, from our point of view, don't seem rooted in practicality. Or we want to treat complex issues like simple ones and come to a quick conclusion, without a whole lot of discussion. Sometimes, the leader of the team (not the facilitator) has made a decision ahead of time and wants to steer the group to it, instead of considering all the available options.

This middle period of confusion, frustration, debate, and exploration is what Sam Kaner and his colleagues refer to as the Groan Zone. This is that grey, frustrating, agonizing area between using our divergent skills (generating) and our convergent skills (refining).



Struggling to understand a wide range of foreign or opposing ideas isn't a pleasant experience. Group members get short-tempered, repetitious, insensitive, and defensive, and then they think there is something wrong with their group instead of acknowledging the reality of the grey area. As a facilitator, you can offer a lot of support by preparing a group for the grey area. Describe it as a time when they will perhaps experience some discomfort, but it is part of the process and an aspect of group dynamics.

Group dynamics can make or break the efforts of a group. It's important that the facilitator understand how misunderstanding, miscommunication, going off on tangents, and missing the points are all normal, expectable aspects of problem solving and decision making. The Grey Center is a direct consequence of the dynamics that exist within any group, and it needs to be encouraged in the sense that you want problems to be fully vetted so that they get understood. Working through the awkwardness is part of what leads to a collaborative decision and a sustainable agreement.

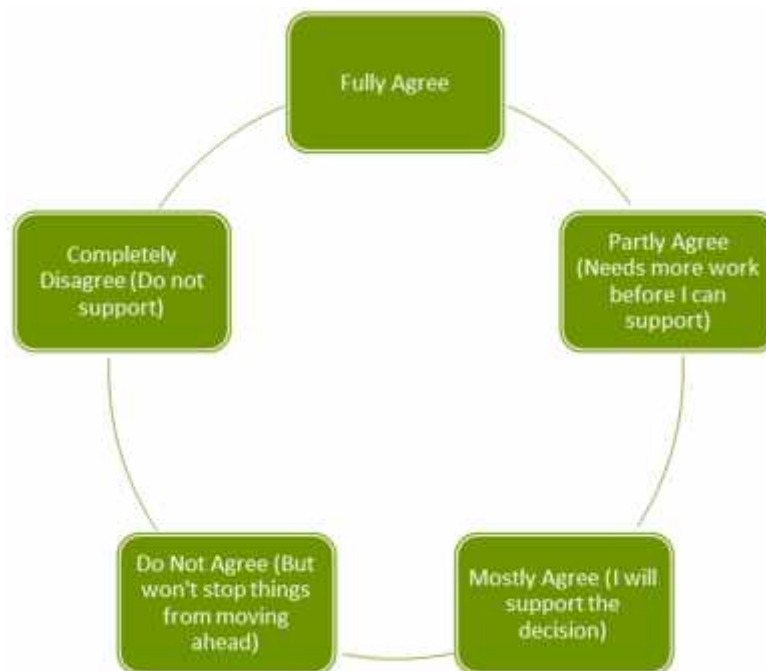
## Handling Controversial Issues

Sometimes when we think about controversial subjects, our first response is to try to get away, or to make the time you are involved as short as possible. We have another way to look at agreements and disagreement, and that is to look at how strongly you feel about something instead of having to choose a firm position on one side or the other.

### No Need for Black and White Thinking

The Degrees of Support can help a facilitator explain that consensus does not mean that everyone agrees to the same degree. The circular nature of the diagram (which reflects the symbol for degree, or °) demonstrates how we may increase or decrease the strength of our commitment to a decision in response to getting more information, considering a different perspective, and moving through the Grey Center (discussed earlier today).

### Degrees of Support



Little in life is really that clear that it needs to be discussed in terms of an absolute yes or no. Like the diagram, we really consider things in terms of degrees. Making agreements or clearing out conflict allows us to do the same thing.

## Communication Skills

### My Shopping List

The two most basic elements of good communication are listening to others and asking questions. The physical process of **hearing**, where sound enters your eardrum and is registered in your brain, is not the same as listening. **Listening** is more of an attitude, a desire to understand what is being communicated, and it is an essential communication skill. Many of us don't listen very well, and we fake it a lot of the time. We pretend we are listening when we really aren't and that can create a whole lot of trouble with other people.

**Once Partner A finishes describing their shopping description, summarize the three or four main criteria.**

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**Then, make a recommendation for a suitable destination.**

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**Can you recommend a few shopping items that reflect their discussion?**

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## Active Listening

**Active listening** means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an **attitude** that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

### Responding to Feelings

The content (the words spoken) is one thing, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to the speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension of listening. Are they disgusted and angry or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent! These are all feelings that you can reply to in your part of the conversation.

### Reading Cues

Really listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?

### Demonstration Cues

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, providing you are genuine in using them.

**Physical indicators** include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give **verbal cues** or use phrases such as "Uh-huh," "Go on," "Really!" and, "Then what?"

You can use **questions** for clarification or **summarizing statements**. Examples:

- “Do you mean they were charging \$4.00 for just a cup of coffee?”
- “So after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?”

### Tips for Becoming a Better Listener

- **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- **Don't interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well at work, you have to set a high example.

## Asking Questions

We spend a lot of our lives asking and answering questions, but we aren't always aware of how we ask questions. Open questions in particular often give us difficulty, which is unfortunate since they are the most important ones for us to become skilled at using.

**Closed questions** can be answered with a single word or two or a simple yes or no. They can begin the closing process in a conversation, or provide confirmation of a detail, but they don't usually lead to gathering more information. Where most people need more practice is asking the open question, those where the listener is given a chance to explain, to tell how they feel about an issue, or offer suggestions.

**Open questions** give us more information because:

- They encourage other people to talk
- We get opinions and ideas from others
- They can help us determine if people have interpreted what we said correctly
- They can help us arrive at consensus much more readily

**Note:** Be very careful about “why” questions. All too often these questions sound like accusations, and the listener immediately becomes defensive.

Relationship building is easier to build if we become skilled at asking questions that give us more information about that person and their wants and needs. Questions help us find common ground with someone, show the person we are interested in them, and puts the emphasis on them rather than us. These are key skills for a facilitator.

**Good questions can include:**

- What is your opinion?
- How do you think we should solve the problem?
- What would you do in my shoes?
- Tell me more about...
- What do you think we can do about this?
- What would you like me to stop doing?
- Would it be helpful if I...?
- Supposing we were to...?
- Help me understand where you're coming from.
- Let's set a time when we can talk about the changes we're both prepared to make.
- I'm prepared to... Would that ease the situation?

**Write down the names of three people that you consider good listeners.**

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## Probing

One of the most common ways of probing is to ask an **open question**, such as:

- "Can you describe that more clearly?"
- "Would you give me a specific example of what you mean?"
- "What do you think we should do?"

The difficulty here is that if you ask too many of these probing questions, the other person begins to feel like they are under interrogation. Be thoughtful about what and how you ask. Consider how many probes you really need to offer.

A second, very effective way of probing is a **pause**. Stop talking. Let the other person fill the silence.

A third way is to ask a **reflective or mirroring question**. For example, let's say the person has just said, "What I really want is more variety in my work." You may respond by just reflecting back to them, "Variety?" The reflective question usually provides you with an expanded answer without you needing to ask more questions. Of course, it is best used in conjunction with a pause.

Reflective questions or statements focus on clarifying and summarizing without interrupting the flow of the conversation. They indicate your intent to understand the sender's thoughts and feelings.

A fourth method that is particularly useful to make certain you are clear about what the individual has said is **paraphrasing** what has just been said, in your own words. An example: "So if I understand you correctly, you..."

You can use this response to show that you want to increase the accuracy of your understanding of what has just been said. You may also want to use it to ensure the sender hears what he has just said. Finally, paraphrasing reassures the sender that you are trying to understand what he/she is saying.

The last method, most often used as a conversation is winding down, is the **summary question**. Example: “You have tried ignoring the scent of your colleague’s cologne, you have talked with him about how it affects your allergies, and you have tried shutting your door to keep the scent from your workspace. None of these has worked and now you are asking me to intervene. Have I got it right?”

These five probes can be arranged like a **funnel**:



## Non-Verbal Messages

Remember that when we are delivering any message, our words are supplemented by our tone of voice and non-verbal body language. When our tone and body language are congruent with our message, we deliver powerful messages. When we are not congruent, people start to wonder what else is going on and what the hidden message is behind our words. We can easily lose track of the conversation.

Here are some things to keep in mind about body language:

- Your **eyes, eyebrows, and mouth** send out the signals that can make a world of difference.
- People who smile are happier than those who don't. **Smiling** releases a chemical in your brain that makes you feel good. It's a great way to establish a rapport with listeners.
- **Eye contact** helps you carry your message to each person in the audience. It builds trust.
- Learn to speak with your **hands**. Draw lines in the air, make a point, count on your fingers, and emphasize length and width.
- Work on appearing **sincere and comfortable**.
- Let your **hands** do what they want to do, as long as they don't get in your pockets, fiddle with an object, or make obscene gestures to your audience.
- Your **body posture** affects your emotions and how you feel determines your posture. If you are confident, happy and ready, your body will show it.

One of the most important things you can do with body language is learn to pick up cues from people that you are making them uncomfortable. Ask yourself if you are doing what you can to make the other person comfortable. Do you fidget, chew gum, click a pen, or check your watch frequently? Are there other things that you do? If so, what message do you think you are sending?

If your conversation partner is doing any of these things while you talk, what could be going on?

- Rocking
- Leg swinging
- Tapping

These are the first signals of tension and indicate that the person feels intruded upon or nervous. If it escalates, these signals are often followed by:

- Intermittent closing of the eyes
- Slight tucking of the chin into the chest
- Shoulder hunching

If you sensitize yourself to these simple cues, over time, people will have the experience of feeling more relaxed, at ease, and open with you (and to you).

Basically, learn to watch for signals, and then adjust your approach. Sometimes just taking one step back, or ceasing talking and getting the other person to talk to you instead, will be all it takes to ease the tension.

## Listening For Common Ground

There are a number of practices we can learn and use as facilitators that can help us and the groups we are facilitating work more productively together. For example, when you were doing the exercise at the beginning of the morning you were finding ways that you and others in the room were similar. As human beings, we are often searching for some affinity with others. This seems to be instinctive for most people. We call this **listening for common ground**.

**What are some ways we have tried to find some common ground today?**

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**What are some ways you might try to find common ground with anyone you meet for the first time?**

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**Items in Common with My Partner**

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# Common Facilitation Techniques

## Top Techniques

### Listen Actively

Be present and mindful throughout the session. Look at people as they speak, use attentive body language, and paraphrase what they are saying. Always make eye contact with people while they speak, when paraphrasing what they have just said, and when summarizing their key ideas. This way, you are aware of things being left unsaid and additional questions. You may also receive confirmation that they have said their piece. Also use eye contact to let people know they can speak next and to prompt the quiet people in the crowd to participate.

### Ask Questions

This is your most important tool in discussion, although you don't want to sound like an interrogator. Design open-ended questions to test assumptions, gather information, and encourage different lines of thought. Then be flexible in how and when you ask those questions. As you become more effective at asking strong questions, you can effectively determine the root cause of problems and encourage full participation in the session.

### Paraphrase to Clarify

This is a form of listening and a way of making certain we understand another by repeating their words back to them. This can also help the speaker hear what they just said. Paraphrasing can be reassuring because it tells people they have been heard or listened to, although you must take care not to sound patronizing or condescending.

Generally we repeat what they have said in our own words. However, if the person is upset or emotional, we may find it helpful to repeat their own words back to them.

Example: "Are you saying..." or, "Do I understand you to mean...?"

### Build on Ideas

Encourage participants to build on each other's thoughts and suspend judgment on those ideas until it is time to analyze them. In addition to giving participants a chance to speak, you can use techniques like brainstorming, mind-mapping, and brain-writing. Using the right activities and processes for the issues under discussion will tap into people's creativity while securing their commitment.

### Stay on Track

Set time slots for each discussion, and then appoint a time keeper or use an electronic timer to keep things active and the discussion flowing. Let people know when they approach a time barrier; 5 minute, 1 minute, and 30 second warnings are all helpful. Make sure that you also respect the time limit that is set by starting and finishing on time.

As the facilitator, you will also have to step in when the discussion goes way off track (which happens very easily once the creative juices get going!) or buttons get pushed. Doing so skillfully is a hallmark of a great facilitator.

### Park It

At every meeting or workshop, tape a flip chart sheet to a wall to record sidetrack items. Later, those items can be reviewed for inclusion in a future agenda, or questions can be assigned to someone for an answer. You can add to the parking lot and so can participants. It is the facilitator's role to make sure those items get acted on (even if just means forwarding them to the best person for answers).

### Be a Conduit for Feedback

Provide feedback to the group from time to time so they understand where they are and maintain progress. If people are not involved (i.e. checking messages, in the hall making phone calls, or their participation stops for some reason), make sure you tactfully remind people of the ground rules. You should also check in to see if they need a break, the pace is okay, or there is something on their minds.

### Challenge Assumptions

People operate under assumptions all the time, and the facilitator needs to bring those assumptions into the open so that they can be worked through and understood by the group. They may need to be debated or challenged. For example, if Mark's idea is being challenged as being too narrow, you need to ask what the basis for that assumption is.

For example: "Ian, you said that Mark's idea is too narrow. Can you please explain what leads you to say that?"

### Become a Tracker

Keep track of decisions as well as ideas. (You can ask your note taker to document them if you have one.) Use flip charts or an electronic board to capture notes that everyone can refer back to. Use bullets and symbols (such as stars, checkmarks, and highlights) that are an accurate summary rather than your interpretation of what's been said. Check with the group to make sure that your summaries are clear by asking, "Did I capture that accurately?"

### Label Sidetracks

It's your responsibility to let the group members know when they're off track. They can then decide to pursue the sidetrack or stop their current discussion (and possibly make note of it for a future agenda) and then refocus on where they need to be.

You could say something like, "We are now moving into a topic that isn't on the agenda everyone agreed on. What does the group want to do?"

### Alleviate Nervousness

Some people are socially awkward, while others become terrified if they are put on the spot. Your use of icebreakers and energizers can help alleviate some of that tension, but you'll need more in order to alleviate

people's nervousness and help them be comfortable enough to contribute. Encourage them to speak up and provide opportunities for small group discussion that will help quieter people have a voice. Let them know that spelling is not being graded if they are to write on flip charts and that their drawing skills don't matter if they are creating mind maps or diagrams.

### Draw People Out

Open questions, probing, and body language are all tools we can use to make people comfortable enough to voice their ideas. We all have a tendency to self-censor a bit so you want to make the group feel they are in a safe environment, where they won't be judged or ridiculed.

The art of drawing people out is more directive than reflective listening. When facilitators ask questions such as, "Can you say more about that?" or "Can you elaborate on that statement?" they are making a judgment that it would benefit the group to hear more from the person who has just been speaking.

### Use Mirroring

This means using the same words or body language as another person. This may make us feel uncomfortable and like we are mocking another person, but it does have the effect of making others feel more comfortable with us.

### Gather Ideas

Not unlike brainstorming, this is where we use open questions and probing to make sure we get everybody's ideas out there. Who knows where the best idea will come from? If you have some quiet people in the group, try to elicit ideas from them as well as the talkers. Small group discussion and then reporting back to the larger group can be useful for this.

### Use Queuing or Stacking

This technique is particularly useful when several people want to speak to a topic or respond to something you or someone else has said. By naming the order in which people will speak, you reassure the group and the individuals in the group that you haven't forgotten them and that you've created a space for them to speak. As an example, "OK, Tim is first, then Sue, followed by Michael, and then Rob."

Don't use this technique too frequently, or people will feel as though they are being held up or that they will run out of time to speak.

You can also encourage others to speak up, reduce tangents, and prevent people from taking up too much talking time by using a question like, "Can we hear from someone we haven't heard from in a while?" You can also use a time limit statement, like, "We have five minutes left and I want to make sure we've heard from anyone who hasn't had a chance to comment yet."

To encourage people you have not heard from, try asking, "Does anyone have a different perspective on this issue?" or try, "Jim, you looked like you had something to say. Would you like to take a few minutes to speak now?"



# Providing Effective Feedback

## Giving Feedback

Part of your role as a facilitator includes providing and accepting feedback. People have very strong opinions about the effectiveness of meetings as well as facilitation, and it is important that you are providing a service that they value. It's also important that you are able to accept their feedback and make changes that are needed to provide them an experience that they will appreciate. You can gather feedback on how the meeting is going, behavior of the participants, whether objectives are being met, whether people have the tools necessary to uncover problems and make decisions, and how well you are doing.

### Principles of Good Feedback

The goal of asking for and providing feedback is to make improvements. Therefore, feedback needs to be positive and constructive. It also needs to be offered as closely to the time being discussed as possible, so that people can relate to what was going on at the time. In order to provide feedback that is accepted, the following principles apply:

- **Ask permission** before you provide feedback to ensure that the person or the group is ready to hear what you have to say. If they are not ready, negotiate a better time to talk. Feedback should not be forced on someone, and if it is, you'll find that they do not hear you anyway.
- Be **professional** and **tactful**. Remember that the idea is to improve circumstances or behavior.
- Keep comments **focused on the behavior** and not the person. "You seem uninterested," is not as effective as, "You have returned late from all our breaks in this session, you are checking your phone frequently, and you have not contributed any comments today."
- **Be specific** and describe what has happened, not your impression of what happened. For example, say, "You have been involved in several sidebar conversations this morning," rather than, "You seem distracted."
- Ask the person if your feedback has been **fair and accurate**. If it's not, they'll usually let you know. This kind of approach also helps them to take responsibility for their actions.
- Offer **positive feedback** when things are going well. We can all use some positive reinforcement!

## Feedback Formats

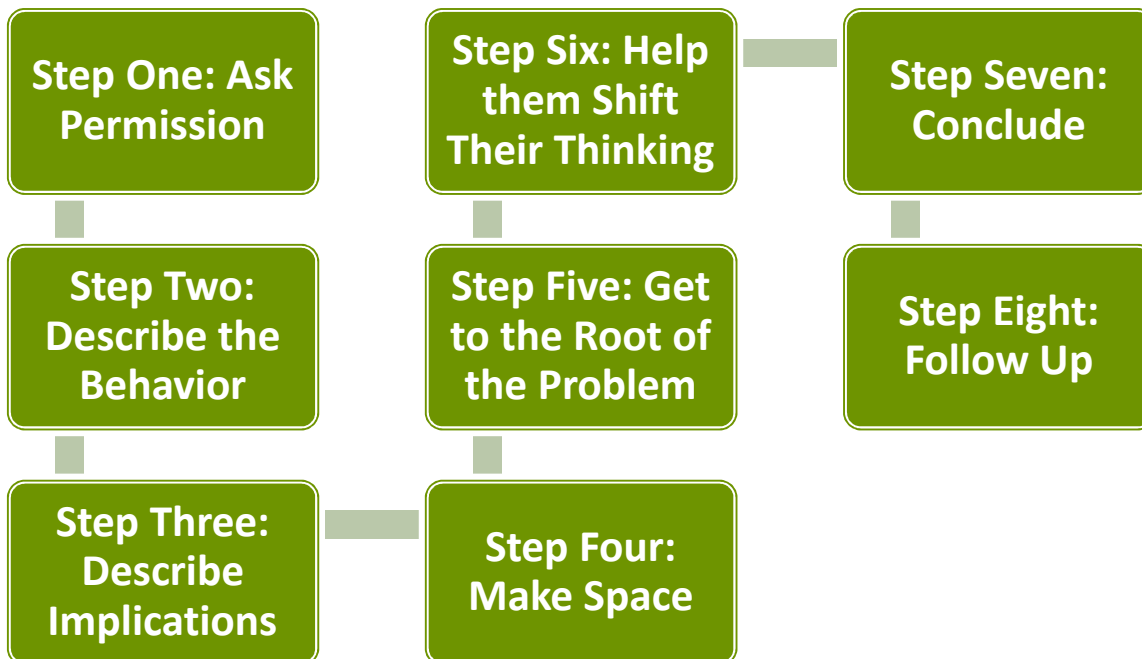
Facilitators have plenty of options when it comes to gathering feedback. Depending on the nature and size of the group, here are some ideas:

- Complete a paper or electronic survey. Then, analyze and discuss the results.
- Post questions within the meeting room and ask participants to rate the items. (You can list bullet points and have them check off what they think or write comments.)
- If the group is technologically savvy and has their smartphones, establish a hashtag (#) abbreviation, and have groups provide feedback and contribute comments over a social networking site such as Twitter.
- List what is and what is not going well. Then, create an action plan that the group agrees to in order to make the needed improvements.

## The Feedback Process

Sometimes we're asked to facilitate a group that doesn't seem to need a facilitator. Everyone is courteous, they seem to get along, and they are not identifying any kind of problem. This is where you are needed more than ever!

You'll need to point out the behavior you are witnessing and then get participants talking and working together on things that matter. After all, you've been asked here for a reason! And, as we've highlighted already, feedback is necessary for other reasons, too. Here is a process that you will find very practical in your work as a facilitator.



Step One: Ask permission.

**Background:** You need to ask permission for a few reasons. First, this allows the receiver to identify if there is a better time. Second, when they grant you permission, it signals that they are open to hearing what you say.

**Example:** “I’m going to insert a break here and then offer you some feedback that I think will help things along. Is that okay with everyone?”

Step Two: Describe the behavior.

**Background:** Don’t focus on specific people. Instead, give a clear description of what you saw and heard.

**Example:** “In the e-mail survey that I sent last week, several of you mentioned very specific examples of what was not working on this team. We’ve been here for an hour already, and no one has mentioned these examples.”

Step Three: Describe the implication of continuing the behavior.

**Background:** Be professional and tactful. Your goal is to provide the group with the safety and security to openly speak about these issues.

**Example:** “If you don’t feel comfortable in discussing these issues, things are not going to change.”

Step Four: Provide space for the other person(s) to respond.

**Background:** Listen attentively, paraphrase, and summarize. Arrange smaller groups for discussion if that will help quiet people speak up.

**Example:** “You’ve explained that these issues aren’t being discussed because people are afraid of insulting one another, and that there is a potential for backlash. Do I have that correct?”

Step Five: Get to the root of the problem.

**Background:** Make sure that you are dealing with the real problem and not just symptoms. Acknowledge that the issue can be dealt with as a problem that needs solving.

**Example:** “What steps can you take to make sure we have the safety in this environment to proceed?” Suggestions could include ground rules or agreements like:

- What is said in this room stays in this room.
- We are here to make progress and to improve.
- We are committing to being open-minded and open to change.

### Step Six: Help them shift their thinking.

**Background:** Since people listen to themselves far more readily than they accept the ideas of others, have the members of the group offer their ideas and support what they have to offer. Build on their ideas to help them move ahead.

**Example:** “I think the suggestions you are offering will work. I have a couple of ideas to add so that we can move ahead. Would that be okay with you?”

### Step Seven: Conclude the feedback session.

**Background:** Establish a clear action plan which you will support and encourage them through. Let people know that they since have worked through this, you will be returning to the agenda. (You may want to offer a short break or stretch as a transition.)

**Example:** “Thank you for your openness and willingness to work through this problem together. As we move ahead, we’re committed to...”

### Step Eight: Follow up.

**Background:** If the group is making a significant shift in behavior, they may need more support than you initially expect. You need to follow through with that support so that you don’t have to go through the entire process again later.

**Example:** An hour or so later, you can ask, “Is everyone comfortable with how we are doing now? Is there anything else we need to adjust?”

## One Step Further

### Facilitators and Feedback Language

Facilitators use language that helps people to feel comfortable and welcome to speak. They try to avoid questions and comments directed to people. They focus on behavior. They avoid assumptions and generalizations such as, “usually,” “always,” or “you should.” They focus on phrases such as, “What do you think of...” or “Let’s try...”

In opening up a session for feedback, they will use statements like:

- I have noticed...
- Can I offer you a suggestion?
- I am wondering if...
- I am concerned about...

## Tips for Receiving Feedback

As a facilitator, it's also helpful if you can take some time and help people in accepting feedback. (This will be helpful to participants in facilitation as well as performance reviews!) This can be difficult for many of us, partly because we do not know how to accept a compliment, and partly because we are so determined to avoid making mistakes or failing.

Participants can learn how to accept feedback in an open manner by:

- Listening with an open mind and heart.
- Encouraging the speaker to focus on their behaviors, not them (if they are having trouble with this).
- Using open ended questions, summarizing, and paraphrasing to ensure your own understanding.
- Trying not to get emotional or defensive.
- Offering your point of view, maintaining a calm voice and relaxed tone.
- Accepting that even if you don't like what you are hearing, when it comes to being accountable, you have to take responsibility for your actions (or non-actions).
- Offering solutions, rather than expecting the other person to tell you what to do.
- Listening for the other person's perspective and how your behavior impacts him or her, as well as the team.
- Do your best consistently and reliably.
- Thank someone who offers you a compliment.

## Managing Divergent Perspectives

### Sequencing

Usually if a lot of people are taking part in a discussion, there are a lot of differing perspectives on the issues. When this happens, everyone approaches the topic from their own point of view and their own frame of reference. The facilitator's challenge is to help people value one another's contributions.

Sometimes facilitators have a tendency to cut people off if they appear to be off topic. However, deciding what is off topic and what will eventually help the group understand one another better is not easy to discern.

What can a facilitator do? The simplest and most straightforward technique is **sequencing**. With this technique, the facilitator validates each perspective and then directs a group to focus on each line of thought in sequence, one at a time. This is very similar to queuing or stacking, except with points of view rather than speakers being stacked.

### Case Study

A group of managers met to discuss buying new computers. One manager, Tom, made a controversial statement about Microsoft Word, and another manager, Janet, had a private reaction to that statement.

“I hope Tom stops talking soon,” thought Janet. “He’s going on a tangent and is wasting our time.”

However, the next person to speak responded to Tom’s comment. After a few minutes Janet said, “OK, folks, we’ve got to get this discussion back on track.” Someone else said, “Thanks, Janet. I too thought we’d drifted off topic.” This was a critical juncture. Tom felt like he had been put down, and Janet felt irritated and guilty.

Question

**How could a facilitator have handled this situation differently?**

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## The Language of Facilitation

### Applying the Language

A particular style of communication has evolved as a part of facilitation. Having skill with these techniques is particularly important when it comes to commenting on participants’ behavior without offending them.

#### Paraphrasing to Clarify

This involves describing, in your own words, what another person says. Monitor your tone so that your voice is supportive.

- “If I understand you correctly, your idea is to...”
- “Is this an accurate understanding of your point..?”
- “What you are saying is...”

You should be paraphrasing regularly throughout the session to check your own understanding and to contribute to accurate notes. Your repetition will reassure participants that you are hearing what they are saying. It is also helpful if the group is not making progress or they seem to be stuck. New facilitators often receive feedback that they are not paraphrasing enough.

## Stepping in on Troublesome Behavior

The facilitator's role includes keeping a safe, open, and productive environment. If people exhibit behaviors that interfere with the goals of the group, it's up to the facilitator to intervene. Using the feedback tools we discussed previously are often enough, although sometimes conflict resolution is needed.

## Perception Reading

This is your ability to assess a participant's inner state in order to see if you understand what they are feeling. You might be picking up signals from their body language, verbal statements, or a shift in their emotions. In order to check that you are reading things correctly, and to support the individuals, you can use statements like these:

- "Ruth, you seem to be reacting to that last comment. Will you share how you are feeling?"
- "James, you seem frustrated by this discussion. Is that how you feel?"

Perception reading is very important for a facilitator, as it means you recognize emotional shifts which might interfere with participants' ability to stay engaged in the process.

## Case Study

### Facilitating Group Decision-Making: The City Council

#### Task Information

In this exercise you will be given a decision to make that is not uncommon in public service. As a group, you will have to make a decision that will affect the entire community. Unfortunately, there is no single "right" answer. Only your group can decide what the members feel is right. As you will see, your decision will involve a question of values. In this exercise, you may also discover some of the ways that conflicts arise in decision situations and how these can be minimized.

#### Background

On March 13 the City Council of New Bristol received notification that Stanley and Sophie Kucinski had willed their property at 125 Ridge Road to the city. The letter stated that the Kucinskis had attached the following stipulations:

- The Council must accept the donation within three months or forego any claim to it.
- The Council must also decide on its use by this date.
- If the Council chooses to lease, sell, or donate the property, it may do so to either a nonprofit or profit organization as long as the use contributes to the quality of life of the community.

It is now June 12 and council members are meeting to make their decision. Prior to the meeting, they solicited requests and suggestion for use of the property, a 10 room brick structure located on approximately one acre of prime land. The following bids were received:

- **The Friendship House**, a United Fund agency that runs programs for minority and disadvantaged youth, has requested that the city arrange a lease/purchase agreement. New Bristol is primarily an industrial (steel) town with a growing black and Asian population. There is clearly a need for programs for the disadvantaged young people, but neighbors in the area

- have vocally come out against the Friendship House proposal, saying, “We don’t want ‘them’ over here.”
- **Saint Stanislaus Church**, whose property borders on the Kucinskis’ on the east, has offered to buy the property for \$125,000. The church would convert it to additional parking facilities to accommodate their growing crowds on bingo nights. Many senior citizens support this use, since bingo is one of few recreational outlets for them and safe off-street parking is at a premium.
- A **local builder** has offered to buy the property and develop it into a moderately priced retirement condominium building. This would require special building permits, but would help the tax base and also be attractive.
- A **local women’s group** has proposed a three-year lease to set up a Women’s Centre. It would provide workshops, birth control, abortion counseling (and possibly a clinic), and serve as a refuge for battered women. According to police, domestic violence has increased drastically as inflation and layoffs increase stress in this working class community. The Rector of Saint Stanislaus’ Church is strongly opposed to letting the women’s group have the property.
- One of the **major oil companies** has submitted a bid of \$300,000 for the property if the Council will grant a zoning change to allow a gas station. These funds could be used to buy sorely needed playground equipment, but the gas station would be an eyesore on Ridge Road.
- **John Lateck** has offered to buy the property for \$200,000 and convert it to a private club. He has assured the Council that it would not be an “ordinary” bar. Rumors are that John is a homosexual. Parents of children at Saint Stanislaus School have besieged the Council with letters smearing John and alleging that the property would turn into a gay bar.
- **Nafco**, a statewide drug addiction service, has asked to lease the property to set up a drug rehabilitation center with residential facilities.

**Discussion Question**

Assume that as a group you form the City Council. What will you do with the Kucinski property? You must make a decision.

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## Building Agendas

Part of facilitating meetings is developing an agenda. The purpose of an agenda is to keep the meeting focused on a central set of topics. However, agendas can easily become overcrowded and interfere with the process.

Here is an easy process for developing an agenda.

### Step 1

- List all potential meeting topics
- Be sure to ask all meeting members for ideas

### Step 2

- Define the overall goal for each topic

### Step 3

- Decide what can be handled outside the meeting (before or after)
- Cut down the list

### Step 4

- Define success for each agenda item

## Dealing with Difficult Dynamics

### Mix and Match

Misunderstanding and confusion are normal when a group has to wrestle with difficult issues. Periods of tedium, tension, impatience, and frustration are normal experiences, but they are nonetheless unpleasant.

This is usually the time when the group looks to the facilitator to get them through this difficult patch. Facilitators are asked to control the offending group member or to get the group back on track.

The truth is that in almost every group there are people who we find a challenge to work with.

#### Big Talkers

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#### The Kidder

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#### Exhausted and Droopy

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#### Not Into It!

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**Poor Follow-Through on Assignments**

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**Failure of Participants to Arrive/Return from Breaks on Time**

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**Whisperers**

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## 12 Easy Ways to Intervene

### Give It a Name

Sometimes simply identifying and describing a destructive behavior to the group is enough to change that behavior. Be sure to check for agreement after your process observation.

Examples:

- "You're not letting John finish his report."
- "I think you are trying to force a decision before you are ready."
- "It seems to me that..."

### Check for Agreement

Almost any time you make a statement or propose a process, give the group an opportunity to respond. Don't assume they are with you; take the time to ask.

Examples:

- "Do you agree?"
- "Alright?"
- "Okay?"

A powerful way of checking is to look for the negative. Make silence a sign of confirmation. Rather than saying, "Do you all agree with me?" you could ask:

- "Are there any objections?"
- "If there are no objections, we'll move on to ..."
- "Is there anyone who can't live with that decision?"

### Avoid Process Battles

Don't let the group get locked into arguments about what the best way to proceed is. Point out that you can try a number of things to keep things moving along.

Examples:

- "We can try both approaches. Which one would you like to try first?"
- "Can we agree to cover both topics in the remaining time? Okay, which do you want to start with?"

### Echo

Don't get backed into answering questions the group should be answering for themselves. Skillfully rebound the question back to the group.

Examples:

- **Group member:** Facilitator, which problem should we deal with first?
- **Facilitator:** That's up to the group. Which do you think we should discuss first?

- **Group member addressing the facilitator:** What was the inflation rate for last year?
- **Facilitator:** Who can answer that question?
  
- **Group member:** I don't like the track we are taking here.
- **Facilitator:** What do you think we should do? (Avoid being defensive)

## Keep the Group on Track

When the group has gotten off track or the discussion has broken down, playing dumb is a way of getting the group to focus on its own process by having to explain it to you. It's a form of boomeranging, and is easy to do when you are really confused.

Examples:

- "Can someone tell me what's going on?"
- "I'm confused. What are we doing now?"
- "Where are we?"
- "I'm lost. I thought we were..."

## Hold Them to Their Word

Once the group has agreed to a procedure, your credibility and neutrality may be at stake if you don't enforce that agreement.

Examples:

- "Wait a second. You agreed to do a fishbone diagram, but now you're taking a vote."
- "Harry, please let John finish."
- "Sorry, Beth. I'm afraid your time is up."

## Encourage and Compliment

Sometimes, the group may need to be encouraged to keep going until they reach a solution.

- "Could you say more about that?"
- "Please stick with it for a little longer."
- "Keep going. I think this is useful."

## Deal With/Accept/Legitimize/Defer

It is important to deal with doubt and criticism. One strategy is to **accept** or **legitimize** the group member's feelings. You could say something like, "You're not convinced we're getting anywhere? Perhaps you're right. How does the rest of the group feel?"

You can also try persuading them to give it more time by saying something like, "Are you willing to hang on for 10 more minutes and see what happens?"

## Don't Be Defensive

If you are challenged, don't argue or become defensive. Accept the criticism, thank the individual for the comment, and return the issue back to the individual or group.

Examples:

- "I cut you off before you were finished? I apologize. Please continue."
- "You think I'm pushing too hard?" (Lots of nods) "Thank you for telling me. How would you like to proceed from here?"

## Use the Group Memory

The group memory (i.e. agenda or flip chart) can also be used to reinforce many of these interventions and preventions. For example:

- Walking up to the memory item and pointing at the agenda item the group should be dealing with can help refocus the group.
- Getting agreement on content can be supported by writing down or circling the subject to be discussed.

## Use Your Body Language

Many of these interventions and preventions can be reinforced, and sometimes even made, by the movement of your body or hands.

Examples:

- Regaining focus by standing up and moving into the middle of the group.
- Enforcing a process argument by holding up your hand to keep someone from interrupting.
- Encouraging someone by gesturing with your hand.

## Keep It Simple

The better facilitator you become, the fewer words you will have to use. When you have really done a good job, the group may leave thinking they can do it without you next time. Use your hands, eye contact, and partial sentences to communicate economically.

Examples:

- "I'm sorry. You were saying that..."
- "Could you say that again?"
- "The point you were making was..."

## Building Sustainable Agreements

As a group, and as a facilitator, we are often uncomfortable dealing with disagreement. We want to sweep things under the rug, or under the table, and never let them see the light of day. However if issues aren't discussed at the meeting, you can bet they will be talked about after the meeting, in the washroom, or in the media.

So how do we make sure that all points of view have been considered? Our options can include the items listed below.

**Speak from your own perspective.**

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**Specify requirements.**

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**Use the who, what, where, when, why, and how (WWWWWH).**

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**Solicit facts and opinions.**

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**Review starting positions.**

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**Search for unrepresented perspectives.**

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**Raise difficult issues.**

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## Stages of Team Development

### The Five Stages

As early as the 1970's, researchers were discovering that groups of individuals working together go through four distinct stages of development. The most famous representation of this model is Tuckman and Jensen's Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing model. Over time an additional stage has been added to reflect the natural end to a group: Adjourning. The stages are similar to human development: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

One of your roles as a facilitator is to help the group grow and develop. Sometimes they are together for a very short time, so you will try to move them to a productive stage as quickly as you can.

Think of how you felt when you learned you were coming to this workshop. While that isn't a perfect example of the other stages of team development, you may see a resemblance between how you felt upon learning you would be in this workshop and how a new group or team member might feel.

## Stage One: Forming

### At this stage:

- Group members may be anxious, adopt wait-and-see attitude, and/or be formal
- No clear idea of goals or expectations
- They need to get to know one another
- Not sure why they are there

### A facilitator can help by:

- Planning introductions and an orientation
- Using icebreakers
- Establishing ground rules
- Determining decision making methods

## Stage Two: Storming

### At this stage:

- Team members are eager to get going and they may be impatient with delays
- Conflict can arise as people bring different ideas of how to accomplish goals
- People notice differences rather than similarities
- Some members may drop out mentally or physically

### A facilitator can help by:

- Modeling appropriate behaviors
- Separating problems from people
- Enforcing ground rules and their role by maintaining control of the process
- Keeping in mind that conflict can be healthy

**To move to the next stage**, participants have to put the needs of the group ahead of their personal interests.

## Stage Three: Norming

### At this stage:

- People begin to recognize ways they are alike
- They realize that they are in this together as a team
- Members get more social
- The team may forget their focus in favor of having a good time

Many groups don't make it to this stage, where there is much more cooperation and understanding than previous stages. **The facilitator should:**

- Be observant of emerging group behaviors
- Encourage the team to express their differences positively
- Help the team to stay focused on their objectives.

## Stage Four: Performing

### **At this stage the team members:**

- Are mature
- Understand their roles and responsibilities
- Want more input in processes
- Are self-motivated and self-trained

The transition to this phase happens as a demonstration of high levels of trust. However, the team can be susceptible to “group think,” so a facilitator must observe and ensure that individual ideas are considered. The facilitator must avoid intervening in the process unless the group becomes stuck and begins to flounder, or they regress to a previous stage and erupt in conflict.

## Stage Five: Adjourning

### **At this stage team members are:**

- Winding down and saying goodbye
- Setting goals for future work independently and/or as part of new groups

Groups may adjourn because they finish a defined project, because they are no longer challenged, or they may have several newcomers and that shifts the group.

In this phase facilitators can support the group by:

- Celebrating participants` participation
- Describing what`s going on
- Looking for and encouraging contribution from everyone as the group winds down
- Encouraging continued productivity

## Group Exercise

Identify the strategies that you can use as a facilitator to help a team work through all five stages of development.

### Stage One: Forming

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### Stage Two: Storming

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### Stage Three: Norming

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### Stage Four: Performing

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**Stage Five: Adjourning**

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## Analysis Tools

As a facilitator, you may find yourselves in situations where you will need to help a group make a decision. Here are two tools commonly used.

### SWOT Analysis

As a facilitator, you may want to assess your own ability as a facilitator after these two days. Or you may be working with a group to help them do a strategic plan for the future. Either way, one facilitation tool you may find useful is a SWOT Analysis.

- The S stands for **Strengths**, either of yourself or of the group you are working with. These strengths are usually internal to you or the group.
- The W stands for **Weaknesses**. Once again, this is an analysis of you or your group's challenges, as seen internally.
- The O stands for **Opportunities** and usually identifies external opportunities.
- The T stands for **Threats** and usually identifies external threats to either you or your group.

## Example

|                                                    | <i>INTERNAL</i>                                                                                                                                                   | <i>EXTERNAL</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>P<br/>O<br/>S<br/>I<br/>T<br/>I<br/>V<br/>E</i> | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I am a great public speaker.</li> <li>● I genuinely connect with people.</li> </ul>              | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I can use some of the skills I learned today to speak more slowly.</li> <li>● I can try taping myself or practicing in front of my friends.</li> </ul> |
| <i>N<br/>E<br/>G<br/>A<br/>T<br/>I<br/>V<br/>E</i> | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I often speak too quickly.</li> <li>● I sometimes rush through material or meetings.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If I am in a stressful situation I might start speaking quickly again.</li> </ul>                                                                            |

## Force Field Analysis

Use this tool to identify the opposing forces working on a situation. For example, let's say you have low attendance at your meetings. You could use a force field analysis to determine what it is that brings people to the meetings and what forces contribute to them staying home.

Draw a line down the center of a flip chart sheet and on one side identify those forces that bring people to the meeting (helps attendance). On the other side identify what keeps them home (hinders attendance).

Now you may be able to determine which things can be eliminated on the "hinders" side, or which might be added to the "helps" side to increase attendance.

### Example

#### Forces FOR Change



#### Forces AGAINST Change



**Meeting Attendance is Low**

### Further Reading:

- ✓ Berger, ASTD. 10 Steps to Successful Facilitation. ASTD, 2008.
- ✓ Bens, Ingrid. Facilitating to Lead! Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- ✓ —. Facilitating with Ease! Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- ✓ Berger, Duane, Michael Doyle, Sarah Fisk, Sam Kaner, Lenny Lind, and Catherine Toldi. Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making. Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- ✓ Petz, Jon. Boring Meetings Suck. Wiley, 2011.