

Tip Sheet 1: The Role of the Facilitator

An effective facilitator ...

1. Assesses expectations and concerns ahead of time
2. Clarifies purpose, outcomes & process
3. Prepares generative questions ahead of time
4. Stimulates dialogue
5. Ensures participant voices are heard more than their own
6. Ensures all voices are heard
7. Keeps group focused on outcomes
8. Adapts the process as necessary to move the group forward
9. Maintains neutrality
10. Diffuses conflict

An ineffective facilitator ...

1. Answers questions that have not been asked
2. Gives unwarranted advice
3. Judges people or ideas
4. Loses their cool

Tip Sheet 2: Active Listening

1. Stay Focused

This is the hardest part. The average person speaks at 225 words per minute but we can listen to about 500 words per minute so our minds are filling in the other 275 words – what we are going to say next, the time when the same thing happened to us, how we can solve the problem or issue the other raises, etc...

2. Use Verbal Cues

Paraphrase and ask clarifying questions

3. Use Nonverbal Cues

Smiles, nods, eye contact and mirroring stance

4. Summarize and Check for Understanding

“I hear you saying ...have I got that right?”

Tip Sheet 3: Useful Prompts

Use Open-ended Prompts

Who? What? Where? When? How? *(But not why – this can elicit a defensive response).*

What do others think about this?

Who can add more to this idea?

Who has another idea?

What else do you have to say?

What have we accomplished so far?

What next steps do we need to take?

Be Direct

It's time for us to move on.

The conversation has gotten off track.

Now let's hear some other thoughts.

There is conflict here. Let's take a break.

Let's look back at our agreements / ground rules.

Let's go around and hear from everyone.

We need to wrap up in X minutes. Final thoughts?

Stay Neutral

Listen with curiosity and to understand

I am hearing you say ... have I got that right?

Give me an example.

Describe that for me.

That's interesting. I never thought of it that way.

Affirm and Encourage

You're on a roll.

Thank you for that thought.

The ideas are flowing.

Go on. Say more.

Tell me more about that.

Can you share your experience with ...?

Tip Sheet 4: Generative Questions

For Focusing Collective Attention

1. What question, if answered could make the most difference to the future of xyz situation?
2. What is important to you about ...?
3. What draws you to this inquiry?
4. What is the deeper purpose here?
5. What opportunities can you see?
6. What do we know so far?
7. What do we still need to learn about?
8. What assumptions do we need to test or challenge here?

For Connecting Ideas / Finding Deeper Insight

1. What's taking shape?
2. What are you hearing underneath the variety of opinions being expressed?
3. What's emerging for you?
4. What new connections are you making?
5. What had real meaning for you from what you've heard?
6. What surprised or challenged you?
7. What's missing from this picture so far? What are we not seeing?
8. What do we need more clarity about?

For Forward Movement

1. What could happen that would enable you / us to feel fully engaged / energized about ...?
2. What's possible here?
3. What needs your / our immediate attention?
4. If success was guaranteed, what bold steps might you / we choose?
5. Who can take next steps?
6. How can we support you / each other in taking the next steps?
7. What unique contribution can you /we each make?
8. What seed might we plant together today that could make the most difference to the future?

Adapted from *The Art of Powerful Questions* by Eric Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs

Tip Sheet 5: Challenges and Traps

Shy, quiet person

- Make eye contact
- Encourage with smiles and nods
- Read and comment on body language
- Call for a “Once Around”
- Walk closer to them so they can answer you without facing the group

Dominating person

- Avoid eye contact
- Hold up hand
- Refer to group agreements
- Shift attention to other topics or speakers
- Call for a “Once Around”

Talkative person

- Discontinue eye contact
- Wait for intake of breath
- State the need to hear from others
- Repeat question and call on a different person

Discussion off track

- Provide visuals of the process such as listing both sides of the argument on the board or drawing a road map of where the group is in the process.
- List and re-state the meeting goals
- Ask participant to summarize where the group was before the discussion veered
- Put tangents in the “garden plot” (aka “parking lot”)

Discourteous person (won’t follow rules; puts others down)

- Refer to group agreements
- Announce short break to speak privately

Challenge directed at facilitator

- Ask for context behind the question
- Defer to the break

Tip Sheet 6: Staying Centered

In moments of stress the amygdala triggers the “fight or flight” response, virtually shutting down the pre-frontal cortex, the brain region responsible for clear thinking and rational decision-making. When we’re hot headed or anxious, we literally can’t think straight.

Pause. Slow deep breathing counteracts the “fight or flight” response and allows us to go through the “LOOPS.”

LABEL and LOCATE the Emotion

- Simply labeling and acknowledging an emotion interrupts the fight or flight feedback loop from Amygdala.
- Labeling separates the emotion from your identity. “I have anxiety ” versus “I am anxious.”
- Notice where you feel the emotion in your body and let it go with each out-breath.

OBSERVE the Emotion Moving On

- Choose imagery that resonates with you – waves or a current washing the emotions away, winds blowing them away, birds swooping in to carry them away. The options are endless.

OPT for OBJECT Deflection

- Bring a symbolic item to calm you, remind you of your strength or to “catch” comments that might rattle you. Think a loved one’s cologne, a sturdy rock, an absorbent sponge, catcher’s mitt, etc.

PROCEED with Intention

- What is your highest purpose for this work?
- Invoke your wise person / role model. What would they do? What would they most want for you in this moment?

STEADY Yourself

- Take a few moments to feel the sensations of the soles of your feet as they press into the ground below you. This can help ground you in the present moment.

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response, lies our growth and our freedom.”

~ Dr. Viktor Frankl