

Facilitation Techniques.

The Role of the Facilitator, Tips and Tricks

As the IFC officer responsible for member development and programming, you will need to develop facilitation skills. Below are some tips and tricks to get you started. Facilitation, like many other skills, takes time and practice.

GUIDES

Effective facilitators are guides to help the participants move through an intensive and challenging experience.

- Attention is placed on participants, not on selves.
- Participants are fully engaged, attentive and actively participating.
- Participants are allowed to struggle with issues and encouraged to find personal answers.
- Facilitators are comfortable with silence during discussion and allowing participants the opportunity to fill the void.

FULL PARTICIPANTS

Effective facilitators are full participants in the program experience right along with participants and session leaders.

- Facilitators sit among participants in educational sessions and at meals (as applicable).
- Facilitators complete all worksheets, reflections and participate in experiential learning activities.
- Facilitators do not reminisce or attempt to recreate past experiences.
- Facilitators use unscheduled time to connect with participants who are struggling with curriculum or home campus situations.

ROLE MODELING

Effective facilitators serve as positive role models for each other and participants.

- Relationships with participants are professional and appropriate.
- Unacceptable/inappropriate behaviors are confronted and addressed.
- Sessions are not used to advance personal agendas.
- Facilitators are on time (early) for all sessions.

TRUST THE PROCESS

Effective facilitators trust the process and allow the program to unfold and take its course. Do not over-process or overanalyze each situation.

- Stay focused on the participants and serve as a guide for all.
- Understand that challenges will occur during the process.

- Anticipate feelings of skepticism, frustration, fear, or being overwhelmed and affirm each feeling as it is experienced.
- Understand that participants will “get it” at different times. In addition, understand that some will never “get it” during academy, but may down the road.

FACILITATION SKILLS

FACILITATION IS:

- Supporting the curriculum through discussion and activities.
- Creating connections of shared information and experiences.
- Helping participants get good information and affirmation.
- Providing focus and direction.
- Appropriately challenging and questioning participants.

FACILITATION IS NOT:

- “Doing” for the participants.
- Being an expert on all topics.
- Allowing discussion to meander off-topic.
- Defensive, argumentative or polarizing.

EFFECTIVE FACILITATORS SHOULD BE:

- Natural and genuine.
- Interested in all participants.
- Engaged in a series of conversations with a variety of participants.
- Clear and non-judgmental in their communication.
- Flexible and able to adapt to different situations.
- Focused on the participant’s experiences and struggles.
- Developing appropriate relationships with participants and facilitators.

DEALING WITH COMMON GROUP SITUATIONS

MANAGING DISCUSSIONS

- Make sure everyone understands the topic and there is agreement about the idea.
- Use flip charts to manage discussion and topics.
- Use the “parking lot” method to “park” thoughts or ideas that are off-topic.
- Summarize discussion periodically.
- Use different techniques to draw in under-participating students and control for over-participating students.
- Make sure that conversations are not constantly recycled.

<p>MANAGING TRANSITIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the first discussion has some sort of closure and the group is ready to move on. • Make segue clear by using links between topics. • Identify strategic moments in discussion to make transitions.
<p>USING GROUP'S ENERGY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the group conversation to roll as long as it is productive. • Encourage physical activity to maintain energy. Get up and move between conversations. • Provide energizers for groups that are tired or uninvolved. • When conversations become heated, don't immediately diffuse them. Allow for some conflict to move the conversation forward. Step in when conversation is no longer constructive. • Listen for signs that the group is ready to move to a new topic.
<p>USING SILENCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust silence when it occurs. Often this is a signal that learning is occurring, and you've identified a difficult conversation. Give participants time to form their thoughts. • Count to 10 before asking another question or filling the void. When the silence becomes uncomfortable to the group, someone usually steps in. Wait for it.
<p>DISRUPTIVE GROUP MEMBERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling disruptive behaviors is often difficult. The key is to handle the disruption without hurting the individual and/or group. • Keep in mind that you are not alone and are bound to have allies in the group. Use these allies to bring the discussion back to a constructive place. • Private conversations outside of the group meeting might be necessary with the disruptive person.
<p>DOMINATING CONVERSATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants might over-participate or dominate conversations. Use techniques to balance conversation or change how you ask questions to encourage others to participate as well. • One-on-one conversations with dominant group members outside of the group meeting space might be necessary.
<p>NEGATIVITY</p>	<p>If a participant is relentlessly negative and skeptical, use techniques that involve participants in problem solving and identifying ways to be optimistic. Do not you not allow the group to succumb to the negativity. Give the complainer constructive feedback outside the group if the negativity impacts the group.</p>
<p>SIDE CONVERSATIONS</p>	<p>Side conversations can negatively impact the group. To stop those conversations, try making eye contact with the smaller group, having the group move around to mix the people, involving the smaller group by asking them a direct question, and/or discussing the issue outside of the group meeting.</p>