

Facilitation Skills

Facilitation skills can aid you in more effectively communicating with your group. These skills can help you to guide your group through processes and decisions. They are an effective tool of conversation which will enhance the relationship with your group. Facilitation skills are applicable to everything that an advisor or a group member does while interacting with their group.

Principles of Facilitation

Definition: Facilitate - to make easier; to guide through a process, experience or conversation.

Facilitating **IS**: Creating a SAFE environment by:

- Enabling and encouraging people to fully contribute their ideas
- Acknowledging contributions
- Listening
- Focusing equally on group process and content
- Presenting directions for exercises clearly and enthusiastically
- Setting expectations but not forcing participation

Facilitating **IS NOT**: Creating an UNSAFE environment by:

- Interrupting
- Being impatient
- Completing people's sentences for them
- Attacking those who disagree
- Sending negative non-verbal messages
- Lecturing

Basic Skills of Facilitation

The following are skills that will be called upon when leading a group through discussion or conversation. Each component is an important part of the overall whole. Become familiar with the techniques, visualize a situation in which you might use them, and trust your instincts.

- **Active Listening** - eye-contact, mannerisms, etc.
- **Focus on Feelings** - eg., "How did that experience make you feel?"
- **Give Recognition** - use names, give thank yous, etc.
- **Paraphrase** - clarify or summarize a person's statement
- **Review** - review where the group has been in the conversation
- **Focus on Similarities and Differences in the Group** - let members know that differences are a good thing
- **Involve Everyone** - ask quieter individuals if they have anything more to add

Basic Elements of Facilitation

- A facilitator allows the group to decide if they proceed with a process. Ownership of the group belongs to the group itself.
- A facilitator confronts his/her own attitudes and stereotypes.
- A facilitator does not "save" the group - the group must take responsibility for its own successes and challenges.
- A facilitator respects the opinions of members of the group.
- A facilitator is not an expert on the issues. It is OK to not have all the answers.
- A facilitator will help the group members feel comfortable with taking risks, but does not pressure anyone to take those risks.
- A facilitator will accept all responses as being valid and not look for a "right" answer.
- A facilitator will encourage group members to respect themselves and others.
- A facilitator will trust his/her intuition and always have the group's best interest at heart.
- A facilitator will have fun and build a healthy relationship with the group.