What does Facilitation mean?
a compendium in progress

fa cil' i tāt: to make easier

What is Facilitation?
Facilitation is a way to conduct meetings and teach that is based on the understanding that *everyone in the group is equal.* It is most effective when the participation of all members is emphasized. Everyone will have the opportunity to contribute, and the danger of overburdening a few members is avoided. Facilitation is essentially a model for group process that provides an environment that enhances your group's problem solving abilities.

The Facilitator:

Facilitators are here to:
      enforce the rules agreed upon by the group
      keep discussion moving, not to make conclusions
      provide questions and mediate the search for answers
      maintain a safe and democratic space for exploration, discussion, and action
      help to liberate voices and opinions, not to engage in closed conversations
      to model and validate active participation!

The Role of a Facilitator is…
1) to initiate discussion (including presentation of activities)
2) to know the process – they should know the structure, goals, objectives, and the dynamics of the exercises, issues and timing of a process
3) to summarize lengthy or confusing comments into concise statements
4) to allow the group to decide if they would like to proceed with the process
5) to summarize group decisions
6) to keep the group moving from one agenda item to the next
7) to believe that every person in the group has something worthwhile to say
8) to have faith that the group can solve it's own problems
9) to create a safe environment for people to share ideas
10) to remain flexible and allow the group process to continue
11) to confront their own attitudes and stereotypes
12) to acknowledge their own expectations as their own
13) to respect the opinions of everyone in the group
14) to encourage group members to respect themselves and others
15) to help group members to feel comfortable with taking risks without pressuring anyone to do so (challenge by choice)
16) to trust their intuition and always have the group's best interests at heart
17) to have fun and build a healthy relationship with the group and its members

Things a Facilitator should NOT do…
1) criticize group members
2) make decisions for the group or pressure the group into a decision
3) talk too much/interrupt people
4) try to 'save' the group; the group must take responsibility for itself
5) try to 'fix' or change someone in the group

Important Things to ALWAYS Remember
1) A facilitator will make mistakes. It is OK when you do. What is important is that you learn from those mistakes. Acknowledging a mistake with the group is a great learning experience.
2) A facilitator is not an expert in the issue. It is OK not to have all the answers. It is wise to know where to retrieve the answer.

When giving feedback, be constructive!

Facilitation Tactics, Tips, and Tools:

Three Phases in Facilitating an Event:
1) **Assess**: who are you working with; identify program goals; work out logistics (time, location, number of leaders/participants)
   Plan: what will work? what will be fun? does it meet the goals? plan time per activity, including de-briefing and allowing for delay; what information do they need to know about you?
   Prepare: gather props/materials etc; prep co-leaders; confirm time/location etc; prep yourself (be fed, rested, etc)
2) **Lead**: don't impel! set the tone – build trust and comfort level in the group/space; model appropriate behavior; style – clear/simple/consistent, enthusiastic, use humor/fantasy etc, communicate well (i.e. listen and respond); provide appropriate challenges; be creative; model experimentation and risk taking; be prepared to change plans, ask yourself: why am I doing what I am doing? and have a good answer (or change what you're doing); have fun!
3) **Evaluate**: during the program: monitor the activities and adjust accordingly; debrief when appropriate – what is the group ready for? is it safe to discuss this now? focus on 1-2 topics, ask what/now what/so what; react and adapt to what happens within the group; after the program: what worked? what would have worked better? what would you do differently next time?

Discussion tactics:

how to stimulate discussion: think through questions before asking, and shy away from compound questions. try to keep the conversation balanced by presenting varied viewpoints in the form of leading questions. Use active listening, and remember TO ASK WHY! use those old questions, why, what, where, how, who, and when

how to deal with dominant voices: avoid shutting each other down. encourage members to check themselves on giving and taking space (give space before you take space). be pragmatic. acknowledge other's personalities and your own with the goal of making a constructive compromise between them. respect the member ownership of the council (don't co-opt it ☺). use your power as chairperson to limit speaking time, to cut off the speaker's list, or to not accept some people onto the speakers list if time is short and there are a lot of people yet to speak (this is a decision in the interest of democracy).

Things to think about:

you can acknowledge with body language – you don't always have to speak!
be aware that you are a focal point for the members!
make yourselves approachable and accessible (within your boundaries)
cultivate relationships with the members, but don't single out
what is your role in different situations?
be aware of shared responsibility with members and managers in this meeting
respect the diversity of the group (don't expect everyone to work the same way)

Tips for Constructive Processing (during or after an event)

1) Ask open ended questions (how did that feel? how was that for you? how was that experience?)
2) Focus on feelings (how did you feel? what is one word you could use to describe your feelings right now?)
3) Draw out the lessons (what can we learn from that?)
4) Focus on one issue at a time (we want to move on to that, but first lets make sure we've covered this topic thoroughly)
5) monitor verbal and non-verbal behavior constantly (look for signs of confusion, boredom, anger, etc. look for people talking, writing/not writing, yawning)
6) Test out perceptions (what do other people feel?)
7) Appropriate self-disclosure (I'm confused, how do other people feel?)
8) Ask the group to summarize (where have we got to?)
9) Review (we seem to have covered so and so. does that sound right? Anything to add/have I missed anything?)
10) Focus on behavior (what was she doing that made you think that?)
11) to explore more deeply (can you say more about that? what would be an example)
12) ask the group to diagnose itself (what is happening here right now?)
13) diagnosing (does the large amount of joking going on suggest avoidance of an important issue?)

A model for reflection on a Facilitation event:
WHAT? What happened during the activity? State the facts, identify behaviors, refrain from opinions and judgments, but note all relevant exchanges.

NOW WHAT? So what are you going to do about it? Did the behaviors serve you or the group? What did you learn from your (individual or collective) success or failure? What was your individual role in the process, and was it satisfactory? Define the team's synergy or pattern of interaction, and note the areas of ease and difficulty.

SO WHAT? What can be different next time? What good things should remain unchanged? What things should evolve or be discarded? How will you measure success? How do you create permanent, positive change?

Conceptual Model of Participation-Based Learning:
you begin as a…
Student
people come to the space with a variety of preconceptions and expectations and vary8ing levels of apprehension and excitement; this sense of internal stimulation is called…
Disequalibrium
which refers to an individual's awareness of a mis-match between old and new ways of thinking/information. this state must be present for learning to occur. by participation in an experience that is beyond one's comfort zone, individuals are forced to integrate new knowledge or reshape existing preconceptions; this is experienced by participants being placed in a…
Novel Setting
a unique environment, on that is not familiar to the participant, helps to break son individual barriers. a heightened level of awareness develops. the underlying conditions of effort, trust, a constructive level of anxiety, a send of the unknown and a perception of risk-taking are integrated with a…
Cooperative Environment
this establishes an atmosphere for teaching and making use of cooperative rather than competitive learning. This fosters opportunities for participants to develop team cohesiveness. this foundation exists while participants are presented with…
Unique Problem Solving Situations
challenging problem solving situations are introduced to participants in a sequence of increasing difficulty. group members are forced to draw on their mental, emotional and physical resources. completion of these tasks leads to…
Feelings of Accomplishment
this success fosters increased self-esteem, improved communication skills and more effective problem-solving skills. the meaningfulness of these successes is augmented by…
Processing the Experience
participants are encouraged to reflect and in some manner express the thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing. processing is essential to…
Generalization and Transfer
the ultimate goal of the experience is to assist participants in establishing a connection between what they have learned in the space and their life in general

Excerpts from "Motivating Students":
*(*Tools for Teaching *by Barbara Gross Davis;* [Jossey-Bass](#) *Publishers: San Francisco, 1993)*
note: though Facilitating is very different from Teaching, there are many strategic overlaps, especially in the case of motivating participants to contribute and engage

"Whatever level of motivation your students bring to the classroom will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens in that classroom. Unfortunately, there is no single magical formula for motivating students. Many factors affect a given student's motivation to work and to learn (Bligh, 1971; Sass, 1989): interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. And, of course, not all students are motivated by the same values, needs, desires, or wants…Research has also shown that good everyday teaching practices can do more to counter student apathy than special efforts to attack motivation directly (Ericksen, 1978). Most students respond positively to a well-organized course taught by an enthusiastic instructor who has a genuine interest in students and what they learn. Thus activities you undertake to promote learning will also enhance students' motivation.

Be enthusiastic about your subject. An instructor's enthusiasm is a crucial factor in student motivation. If you become bored or apathetic, students will too. Typically, an instructor's enthusiasm comes from confidence, excitement about the content, and genuine pleasure in teaching. If you find yourself uninterested in the material, think back to what attracted you to the field and bring those aspects of the subject matter to life for your students. Or challenge yourself to devise the most exciting way to present the material, however dull the material itself may seem to you."