

Guidelines for Facilitators

A. Prevent: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of intervention.

What are some means of prevention?

1. A collaborative mindset among participants leads people to share responsibility for what happens.
2. General expectations of participants are included in the invitation, repeated at the beginning of a meeting, and explicitly accepted.
3. Agreements are explicitly made, covering many aspects of individual action and group interaction.
4. Specific expectations and agreements may be developed as the group evolves.

B. Prepare: Show participants how they can meet challenges.

1. Participants may be asked to recall what has been useful to them in prior experiences with conflictual situations.
2. Participants may be given suggestions (self-help tools) about what they can do when faced with challenging moments in a group.

C. Be legitimate: Use interventions that are authorized by the group.

1. General agreements for the entire dialogue.
2. Specific agreements about each section of the dialogue.
3. A role description for the facilitator that has been approved by the group.

D. Be compassionate by being flexible not rigid, positive not punitive, inquisitive not judgmental, transparent and human, rather than cryptic and mechanical.

1. Be flexible. Intervene for the well-being and progress of the group. Intervene more frequently at the outset to set precedent for behaviors specified by the agreements. Later, don't intervene on every infraction. Be alert and flexible.
2. Be positive. Instead of naming infractions, suggest a relevant alternative that is in keeping with the agreements. If someone is taking a lot of air time, you might ask if those who have not spoken would like a chance to speak. If someone speaks in generalities about the experience of others, you might ask, "how did you experience that?"
3. Be genuinely curious about group processes and needs. If there is a dilemma about how to proceed, name it and propose a time-limited conversation about options.
4. Be transparent and human. If you are uncertain about how to respond or what to do, inquire about the ideas and perspectives of your team members and/or the participants.

