Recommended Resources for Conference Facilitators

2010

THE WHITE PRIVILEGE CONFERENCE
Understanding, Respecting, & Connecting

FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

from ADL's A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE™ Facilitator's Manual

There are many important behaviors and skills facilitators can employ to help guide a group towards a goal or learning point. A number of these skills are outlined below, accompanied by several verbal examples of the skill. These phrases and techniques are not intended to be "best" examples of scripts or an exhaustive list for every context.

1. **Addressing Behavior –** acknowledging behaviors in the room

   Examples:

   "There seems to be a lot of side conversations. Is that okay with everyone?"

   "There is low energy in the room. Should we take a stretch break?"

   "There's a lot of emotion building right now that is interfering with productive discussion. Let's take a few deep breaths and a moment to remember the ground rules."

   "What's happening right now?"

2. **Bridging –** making connections, tying one learning point to another

   Examples:

   "We started to talk about ally building earlier, and now we're getting into some more concrete ideas of how to be an effective ally."

   "Your point builds on what Carlos mentioned this morning."

   "Kelly and Esther have both given examples of institutional classism."

3. **Checking for understanding –** making sure directions and questions are clear

   Examples:

   "Does everyone understand?"

   "Let me restate the instructions one more time."

   "Is that question clear?"

   "In other words…"

4. **Clarifying –** interpreting, clarifying misunderstandings, defining terms

   Examples:

   "You feel …. Is that correct?"

   "What does the word 'empathy' mean to you?"

   "There seems to be some miscommunication happening here; let's take a step back."

   "Do others understand institutional racism in the same way?"

   "Please say more about that…"

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5. **Encouraging –** prompting, nonjudgmental responses, open-ended questions, respectful probing

   Examples:

   "We're all learners in this process."

   "This can be a hard topic to discuss."

   "Thank you for sharing that story."

   "This seems hard for you."

   "What are other participants' thoughts?"

   "I appreciate everyone's participation in the previous discussion."

6. **Evaluating –** asking questions that encourage group members to examine an issue from a different perspective

   Examples:

   "What's another way to look at this issue?"

   "A different take might be…"

   "I appreciate Joseph sharing his perspective on the matter; do others have a similar or different perspective?"

7. **Gatekeeping –** managing time and group participation

   Examples:

   "Let's hear from some of the people who we haven't heard from..."

   "Let's take two more responses, and then we'll move on."

   "Let's hold that question for right now, because we're going to address that topic this afternoon."

   "A number of people have their hands up. Let's line them up."

   "We have 20 minutes to discuss this topic."

8. **Giving –** judiciously offering facts or personal experiences to clarify a point

   Examples:

   "Thank you for that observation. I had a similar experience at a meeting, where…"

   "I'm reminded of a recent study from Rethinking Schools which said…"

9. **Modeling –** demonstrating the level and manner of personal sharing, encouraging participation by sharing personally

   Examples:

   "You will fill out your own diagram; however, first I've drawn one on this chart pad for myself that I would like to share…"

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"Look at the four questions and choose one you're willing to share with a partner. For example, I will share a personal experience…"

10. **Naming feelings –** interpreting and acknowledging feelings

    Examples:

    "You seem to be frustrated with this conversation."

    "It appears that you're satisfied with the resolution of that discussion. Is that correct?"

    "I have noticed that you are hesitant to use this strategy. Are you doubtful of its effectiveness?"

11. **Orienting –** bringing the group back to task, reiterating the question or topic

    Examples:

    "This is a really interesting discussion, hopefully that will continue during breaks or at lunch. The piece we need to focus our attention on now is…."

    "Let's go back to the original question."

    "We've gotten a little off track."

    "How would you relate that experience to our current topic?"

12. **Paraphrasing –** seeking clarity, promoting group understanding

    Examples:

    "A number of different ideas are emerging; let me try to synthesize them into three major points. They are…"

    "The theme seems to be that the administration isn't taking this issue seriously."

    "Chu, can you paraphrase what Karima just said?... Karima, is that right?"

    "I heard you say… Is that accurate?"

13. **Resolving –** conciliating differences, cooperative problem solving

    Examples:

    "Even though you feel that way, Jim, can you understand what Naomi is saying?"

    "This is a complex issue with a lot of different perspectives. How can we find some common ground?"

    "We need to step back for a moment and honor that there is a lot of emotion around this topic."

    "It appears we're at a standstill. How should we move forward?"

14. **Remaining –** honoring silence, allowing participants enough time to reflect and formulate thoughts

    Examples:

    "Let's take a few more minutes before we begin so that everyone can gather their thoughts."

Don′t say anything – allow the silence to exist.

Count to 10 silently before asking another question.

15. **Returning –** keeping all participants engaged in the dialogue, putting the conversation back to the whole group

    Examples:

    "Does anyone have a different perspective?"

    "What feelings did this activity bring up for others?"

    "What do others think about this issue?"

16. **Seeking –** asking for clarification, suggestions, more information

    Examples:

    "What has your experience been?"

    "Can you say more about that?"

    "What does that term mean to you?"

    "Based on that experience, what skills do you feel you need to better address the situation in the future?"

17. **Summarizing –** pulling it all together, restating points

    Examples:

    "Let′s review what we just discussed...."

    "This connects to our first activity…"

    "All of the group′s examples included…"

18. **Transitioning –** explaining connections between one activity to the next, building upon learning

    Examples:

    "In the previous activity we discussed individual identity. Now we′re going to look at identity from the group level."

    "Earlier we mentioned the concept of institutional discrimination. Next we′re going to look more in depth."

    "How do you think this activity relates to the work we were doing before lunch?"

Reference

Killion, Joseph P. and Lynn A. Simmons. 1992. The zen of facilitation. *Journal of Staff Development* 13(3): 2–5.

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UNIQUE ASPECTS OF ANTI-BIAS TRAINING

from ADL's A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE™ Facilitator's Manual

There are many unique dynamics and situations which can arise in anti-bias trainings. It is important that facilitators understand and feel prepared to navigate these unique dynamics in order to maintain a safe and productive environment.

"Target as teacher"

Avoid situations where members of targeted groups are asked to take responsibility for teaching those from dominant groups. While many anti-bias training activities seek to bring to light forms of bias, facilitators must balance the benefits of examining bias against the undesirability of asking people from subordinate identity groups to "bear their pain" for the sake of others' edification. All participants should feel safe to learn and share as they choose, without putting people from subordinate groups on the spot to represent "their people."[1]

"There's another explanation."

Acknowledge participants' willingness to share their personal stories, without asking them to validate or prove their experiences to be "real." Be mindful of responses to those stories such as, "Are you sure that's what they meant?" or "Really? I've never seen that," which seek to find other explanations for behavior other than the discrimination or bigotry the participant felt. These responses can risk invalidating others' experiences and interpretations. Perception is the reality of the perceiver, and participants should be allowed to frame their own experiences. However, facilitators should seek to help participants (especially from dominant groups) recognize the difference between individual experiences and institutional and structural discrimination.[2]

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[1] Those who have greater access to social power and privilege are referred to as the dominant group, agent group, oppressor, or advantaged. Those who have limited access to social power and privilege are referred to as the subordinate group, target group, oppressed, or disadvantaged. Recognizing that these terms are "imperfect," ADL typically uses "dominant" and "subordinate." The term "target" might also be used, as in activities related to building allies.

[2] Structural discrimination refers to the ways in which history, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and culture interact to maintain a hierarchy that allows dominant group privileges and subordinate group disadvantages to endure and adapt over time. Structural discrimination is manifested in inter-institutional dynamics and operations which are neutral in intent but result in discrimination of subordinate group members.

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"What isn't being said?"

Be cognizant of what voices are not present in the room, and try to bring those perspectives into the discussion when appropriate. These perspectives may not be part of participants' personal experience, or there may be participants who do not feel safe enough to share their perspectives. Facilitators can bring those voices out, by sharing alternate perspectives in a neutral manner. For example, "Another point of view might be…" or "Sometimes I've had participants say that they feel…"

"My family never owned slaves."

Discussions of power and privilege create discomfort and can lead to defensive or dismissive responses. Facilitators should seek to respect people's emotions without allowing participants to become immobilized by those emotions. In addition, concepts of privilege and power should never be presented in an accusatory way, which will add to feelings of denial and defensiveness.

While many people may use the term "privilege" as shorthand for white privilege, it is also important for facilitators to recognize and frame privilege as a complex and variable system. Privilege exists across many different group membership dynamics, creating in each person an intersection of privilege and oppression. Each person can have identities in both the dominant and subordinate groups. For example, a person can be Latino, owning class, male and straight or white, working class, female and gay.

As such, participants with subordinate identities may resist thinking about areas where they are privileged. Because all participants bring the various aspects of their own identities to the experience, it is "essential to integrate this complexity into the workshop and use the multiple identities to help participants draw connections across oppressions" (Griffin 1997, 293).

"This issue is black and white."

Avoid the black/white paradigm in discussions about race and racism. Many existing materials, such as videos and articles about racism, focus on black and white, and participants can easily slip into discussions which frame racism in this way. It is important that facilitators continue to reframe the conversation so that it reflects the wider scope of race and racism by including other racial groups (e.g., multiracial, Latina/os), and the complexity of race relations.

In addition, racism is only one form of discrimination. While some sessions are designed specifically to focus on one form of discrimination in-depth, at times, it may be necessary for facilitators to make sure participants are acknowledging other forms of prejudice and discrimination that exist in their organization.

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“But that’s happened to me, too.”

Sometimes participants have difficulty understanding the institutional and structural manifestations of discrimination. Participants, particularly for those in the dominant group, may challenge an example of institutional discrimination because they have had a similar experience on a personal level. While it is important to acknowledge personal experiences, participants should also have opportunities to develop understanding of the differences between personal and institutional and structural discrimination. In training, for example, a heterosexual person might relate an experience where he or she was the target of discrimination at a gay night club. It is important to first validate the experience and how the person felt in this situation. When a participant shares a personal experience such as this, it provides an opening for facilitators to help participants distinguish between a person’s individual and isolated experience of discrimination and the more insidious and reoccurring institutional and structural discrimination that members of the LGBT community experience in society.

A key strategy to promote this learning is to provide relevant examples of the institutional and structural manifestations of the specific form of discrimination the participant has shared. For example, while a straight person felt discrimination in an isolated incident (at the gay bar), he or she probably will not have to worry about being discriminated against in the general public and on a continual basis because of his or her sexual orientation. However, a gay person is a target of pervasive discrimination that he or she cannot escape in the larger society. For example, gay couples who are in lifelong committed relationships cannot enjoy the tax and shared health care benefits afforded to heterosexual couples.

“We’ll never end anti-Semitism. It’s human nature.”

Examining and exploring bias can cause feelings of anger, frustration and even despair. Subordinate group members may feel that “it’s all talk” or “no one’s ever going to change.” And both targets and allies may feel that they are powerless to make real change. As always, facilitators should take care to honor and validate emotions and acknowledge the difficulty of the work. It is also important to emphasis that change is a process. Anti-bias education programs should not be seen as the end, but as part of a longer process.

Reference

Griffin, Pat. 1997. Facilitating social justice education courses. In *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, A Sourcebook.* Ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin. New York: Routledge.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

Possess variety of background experiences and prior learning
Need to participate voluntarily
Need control over learning environment
Desire practical applications
Require respectful environment, in which all individuals and ideas are valid and valued
Enjoy collaboration
Need to integrate new concepts with prior knowledge
Believe in lifelong learning
Act as change agents

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE for ADULT LEARNING (Brookfield, 1986)

Voluntary participation
Mutual respect among participants
Collaboration
Self-direction
Control over learning environment
Action and critical reflection

TERMINOLOGY

Andragogy (Malcolm Knowles) vs. Pedagogy
Critical reflection
Self-directed learning
Learning contract
KWL (Already KNOW, WANT to learn, and what they did LEARN)

Adult Learning Principles

Malcolm Knowles (1975,1980) considered the father of adult learning theory, used the word andragogy to describe the study of adult learning. He distinguished adult learning from pedagogy, the study of how children learn. Initially, it was thought that pedagogy and andragogy were two distinct processes, but current theory sees the two processes on a continuum with pedagogy on one end and andragogy on the other. What separates these two processes on the continuum is the amount of experiences the learners have when they enter the learning experience and the amount of control that the learners have over the learning process and environment.

Adults typically bring a great deal of background experiences and prior learning to any new learning process. Acknowledging adults' understanding and experiences validates them as competent and capable learners. Obviously, the experiences that adults bring into the learning environment do not all relate directly to the new learning topic. It is important, however, that the facilitator of adult learning help adult students see the connections between earlier learning experiences and new information. Guiding adults to use what they already know to understand new concepts is critical. Trainers of adults should begin training sessions by finding out what the adults already know about the topic, whether the information is totally accurate or not.

There are several effective strategies for assessing prior learning. One is the KWL strategy that asks learners what they already KNOW about the topic, what they WANT to learn about the topic, and finally, (at the end of the training session,) what they did LEARN about the topic. Another strategy is the anticipation guide, which is a true-false quiz with questions about the topic, given at the beginning of the session. (Ex: "Children learn equally well from play and worksheets.") The trainer reviews the questions, and participants indicate whether they thought the answer was true or false. This exercise enables trainers to find out what people already know and whether the information they know is accurate. At the end of the session, the anticipation guide is used again to see which questions the participants feel differently about.

An additional strategy used to assess prior learning allows participants to react to statements or questions about the topic on large charts or tablets at the beginning of the session. Then, a discussion ensues, allowing the trainer to review the responses with the group and ask for clarification about what is written. From this process, trainers receive reliable information about participants' prior learning on the topic.

Stephen Brookfield (1986) identified conditions necessary for adult learning. He believed that adult learners should have control over the learning environment. They want to feel that their needs, goals, and expectations can influence what will occur in the learning setting. Trainers must be willing to listen to the voices of the learners and alter the course of the training, if necessary, in order to make sure that the learners have some modicum of control over the outcome. This can be done without changing the overall goals of the training. Often, small adjustments, like additional breaks, discussion time, or collaborative groups, will satisfy the needs of the participants.

Creating respectful learning environments, in which all opinions are valued, helps to allay any concerns or discomfort. Adults should participate voluntarily. In a true learning community, all participants, including the trainer, share ideas and learn from each other. The trainer is seen as a facilitator or guide rather than the only one with knowledge. Adults respond positively to comfortable physical environments, frequent breaks, snacks, and opportunities to collaborate with others in the session.

The concept of self-directed learning for adults was promoted by Knowles. He felt that adults should create personal learning objectives that would allow them to set individual goals and be able to practice using the new learning in practical ways. Being able to connect new learning to real-life situations is a requirement of effective adult learning sessions. Time to discuss the use of new learning in everyday experiences should be built into adult learning programs. Knowles created the concept of a learning contract, which allowed participants to identify and write down personal goals and how they felt that these goals could be met. A learning contract form that has been adapted for use with this program is included in the hand-outs. The trainer could be used as a resource person when participants complete the learning contracts.

Critical reflection is another important element of adult learning programs. John Dewey (1933) recommended the concept of using reflection as a way of seriously considering one’s actions to promote growth and change. Posner (2000) suggested that people do not learn from experience, but rather, they learn from reflecting on experience. Reflective journals can be helpful in enabling adults to keep track of changes in their behavior or actions as a result of new learning and to keep track of how those changes affect their practice over time. Journals allow adults to chart their own courses and be aware of their personal growth and development. Through journaling, adults can gain valuable insights which can then inform future practices. Entries can be shared or used solely by individuals.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is helpful in designing adult learning training that meets the needs of a wide range of people. He identified eight major ways that individuals can learn information. His theory gives teachers the understanding that different people learn material differently. Trainers need to attempt to include as many of these different intelligences as possible in the design of their programs. The intelligences that Gardner identified are linguistic (language and words,) logical/mathematical (numbers and problems,) spatial (perception of objects through senses,) bodily/kinesthetic (use of body to learn,) interpersonal (social skills, working with others,) intrapersonal (learn on one's own,) musical (learning through music,) naturalistic (learning through natural world.) Adults possess a combination of intelligence strengths and will respond more positively to a learning environment in which the teacher incorporates one or more areas of their learning strengths. See handout for a listing of the intelligences identified by Gardner.

In summary, adult learning theory offers trainers valuable information about how to create effective training sessions for adult learners. Adults enter learning situations with knowledge of what they want to learn and how the information will help them in their own personal growth and development. They want control over the learning process and need to believe that their ideas and opinions are valued. Since adults begin any program with a great deal of prior knowledge, the training facilitator needs to access that prior learning and help adult students link what they already know to new knowledge and ideas. Adults should have the opportunity to create real-life scenarios in which they can use their new knowledge. Being able to link theory with practice is an important goal of all adult learning programs.