

Moderation



· GROWING A COMMUNITY II ·

WHAT IS A FACILITATOR?

WITHIN A COMMUNITY PROCESS IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO HAVE SOMEBODY WHO IS NOT JUST ACTING OUT OF HIS OWN PERSPECTIVE, BUT MORE IN THE SPIRIT OF THE WHOLE GROUP PROCESS. SOMEBODY WHO IS SENSITIVE TO SENSE THAT EVERYBODY IS INVOLVED IN THE SAME WAY, NOBODY DOMINATING, AND THAT THE COMMON AIM IS KEPT IN FOCUS. THIS ROLE IS CALLED FACILITATOR. IDEALLY, IT SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED BY THE SAME PERSON BUT BY DIFFERENT PERSONS, E.G. BY ROTATION. THESE PERSONS SHOULD HELP TO CREATE A COLLECTIVE, RESPECTFUL, HONEST AND FRIENDLY GROUP CLIMATE, E.G. WITH THE FOLLOWING TOOLS:

TOOLS

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

At the beginning of a meeting it is nice to give everybody the opportunity to present him/herself. This can be done in the following way:

· Everyone presents him/herself by saying his/her name and the plant(s) he/she loves most: "I am Juana, my grandfather always went with me into the forest to collect mushrooms. I really love mushrooms". When Juana finishes, she can give a stick around in the circle to the next person. Or, for a more energetic alternative, Juana can throw a ball (or anything small and throwable) to any other person in the circle to continue.

ENERGIZERS

In any meeting, especially when you are sitting and discussing a lot, people will eventually get tired, bored or hungry. Always keep in mind to do breaks, enabling people to get a breath of fresh air, a sip of water or a bite to eat. Beyond these basic needs, it can be necessary to bring some energy into the group by small interactive games such as:

Human knot: Bring the group together in a circle, as close as possible and let each person extend his/her arms into the circle. Everybody takes the hands of two different people until all are connected to two others. Now its fun time! Without letting go of any hand, the group needs to untangle the knot.

Fruit Salad: Bring the group together in a circle of chairs and one person will stand in the middle. One chair is missing. The person in the middle asks any yes/no question, like: Who had an apple today? Who likes dancing? Who hates getting up early? Now everybody who answers the question with "yes" has to stand up and find another chair to sit down. Thus, another person will have to stand and ask the next question.

Energizers are not just fun, they also can be used to solve problems by breaking barriers or touching a critical theme. So there is enough space to creatively adapt these energizers to the specific needs and questions.

COMING TOGETHER BEFORE LEAVING

At the end of a meeting, it is nice to not just disperse but end by a conscious and self-reflective way, e.g. by a feedback circle. One by one gives a short resume about the things (s)he is happy about and (s)he did not like so much. A feedback circle can include a specific question alternatively, such as "What do I take home?", "What will I remember about the meeting the next morning?". Before leaving some collective hand-clapping, singing or dancing are possibilities for a common closure of a meeting.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

- Be patient!
- To let others participate, you need to be able to let things go on their own. Others are doing things differently from yourself. Thus, for others to participate, you need to give free space and not a fixed schedule.
- Even if you try to be egalitarian, there are always inequalities, such as courage to speak in a group, language difficulties, etc. Find a way to integrate everybody.
- Not everybody can easily participate, most people are shy or never made the experience to be asked for their opinion. You have to be aware of this culture of communication if you want to overcome it.
- Honestly, growing a self-organized collective process is something totally different from what we are used to in our society. Most of us grew up in rather hierarchical surrounding (e.g. family, school,...). Thus, we are trying to change something that is deeply rooted in ourselves. It is not an easy aim to achieve, and it is something really radical actually.

INTERACTIVE QUESTIONS

- What are your experiences within groups?
 - What is the job of a facilitator?
- Do you know any person who knows how to facilitate group processes? How is (s)he doing it?