

Walking With God's People
Training Materials for Group Facilitators

SESSION THREE

The Role of the Facilitator: 90mins



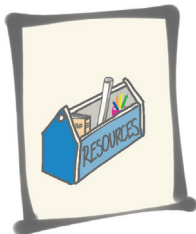
ERTP | Eastern Region Training Partnership
<http://www.ertp.org.uk>



TIMINGS FOR THE SESSION:

These timings are suggested for a 90 minute session. If your group is happy to go to 120 minutes then either the time for the core learning sessions can be extended or you could build in a short break midway.

■ Worship	5 mins
■ What makes someone a good Facilitator?	30 mins
■ Leadership Styles	20 mins
■ Difficult Moments	10 mins
■ Thoughts from the New Testament	10 mins
■ Reflection & Inter-sessional Activity	10 mins
■ Prayer	5 mins



FOR THIS SESSION YOU WILL NEED:

1. Bibles or copies of the New Testament readings listed below
2. The Handouts on The Role of the Facilitator, Leadership Styles and Difficult Moments
3. Large sheets of paper, felt tip pens and blu-tac (and possibly some post-its)
4. Everyone to have their Learning Journal with them

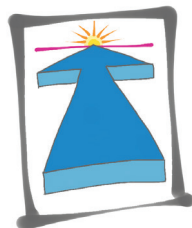
AT THE START OF THE SESSION YOU:

- Might consider asking someone to be ready to finish the session with prayer

5
MINS

OPENING WORSHIP

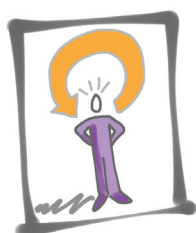
You might start with an opening song and prayer. Alternatively, there could be a moment of quiet reflection.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify the generic skills and personal qualities that a Facilitator needs
- Discuss the Facilitator's role in meeting group needs
- Be able to describe my own natural style when leading and how I'd like to develop my skills in this work.
- Consider potential challenges in leading a session or course

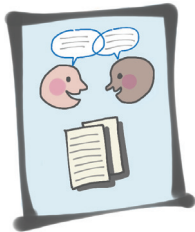
RECAP & REVIEW



Last time, we looked at what makes for a good group experience and at the TIM and Tuckman models. We began to reflect on the qualities and skills that a Group Facilitator needs. We looked at some of the writings of St Paul and asked what we could learn from these about what would make for a good Christian group. For the inter-sessional activity we were asked to reflect in detail on what we think makes someone a good Facilitator.

30
MINS

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD FACILITATOR?



Ask participants to go into pairs and triads and to share their thinking from the inter-sessional activity. **Allow 10 minutes for participants to discuss:**

1. What makes someone a really good Facilitator
2. What sorts of behaviours and attitudes would hinder someone from being a good Facilitator

As an additional task, ask them to define the term 'Facilitator'. What is it that a Facilitator does?

After 10 minutes (or as soon as you see that groups are flagging) draw people together and, working on a flip chart, ask each pair or triad to give you their definition of what a Facilitator is/does. Also ask for their list of key bullet points about what makes someone a good Facilitator. **Allow 10 minutes for this activity.**

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH – IF YOU HAVE THE SPACE

Have each group write out their answers to the 3 questions onto large post-its and to 'park' them on the appropriate large piece of paper hanging up somewhere in the room. You then invite people to get up and go and look at the post-its on each sheet - **allow 5 mins for this** and then work with the whole group to summarise some of the findings.



Introduce the Handout on Facilitation and take **5 minutes** to pick up on and highlight some of the key ideas. This introduces the notion of the Facilitator as 'Accompanyist' so you might want to spend a few moments thinking about how the Facilitator also learns and grows as he or she supports the group.

20
MINS

LEADERSHIP STYLES



1 Ask the group to go back into their pairs or triads. Hand round the Leadership Style Handout to the pairs and ask them to look through them and identify two or three things raised on the sheets which they agree as a group are interesting or which they would like to explore or discuss further **(10 mins)**.

2 Take feedback from each pair or triad on what they have discussed **(10 mins)**. Use this as an opportunity to a) look at the positive behaviours a leader needs and b) to spend a few moments talking about emotional intelligence.

10
MINS

DIFFICULT MOMENTS

Working with the whole group, collect a list on a flip chart of the possible problem areas when leading and facilitating a group of Christians (e.g. quiet or shy people, dominant people, and conflict, disagreement over theology or ways of looking at scripture).

Time is tight at this point so you could either:

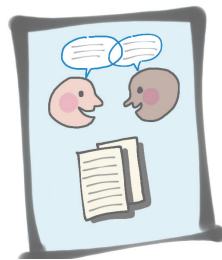
1. Ask the group to come up with some solutions to the problems identified and then distribute the 'Difficult Moments' Handout, or
2. Give out the 'Difficult Moments' Handout and give everyone a few minutes to scan the ideas. You could then ask for a few thoughts about what seem like really workable ideas and which might be difficult to implement.

10
MINS

THOUGHTS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT ON LEADERSHIP

Ask the group (2-3 mins) if they can think either of any stories or passages in the New Testament that might help us understand how Christian leaders should behave in and approach their role.

It might be that the group will suggest to you the story of the disciples squabbling on the road about who is the greatest or the request of James and John to sit next to Christ in glory which is one of the passages listed below (Mark 10v35-45).



Ask the pairs and triads (5 mins) to look at:

1. Mark 10 v35-45
2. Philippians 2 v1-11
3. Galatians 5 v16-26

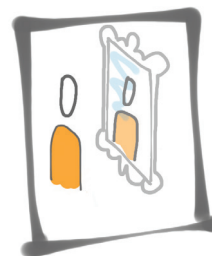
Collect from the whole group some of the key messages that emerge.

10
MINS

FINAL REFLECTION & INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Ask group members to use their Learning Journal or Log to note down:

1. Something that has stood out for them about what makes someone a good Facilitator
2. If they have identified a) a skill that they have personally which will help make them a good Facilitator, and b) a personal trait that they will have to guard against as they lead groups
3. What they think they have learned from the NT about Christian leadership?
4. What they have observed that helped today's session go well



After a few minutes ask if anyone would like to share some of their thoughts about any or all of the four areas listed above.

For the Inter-sessional Activity ask group members to find time thinking about a group they have led in the past:

1. Was the group as successful as you hoped? Why was this?
2. Did you lead it in your preferred leadership style in which you felt comfortable or did you have to flex or vary your style?
3. If you had to vary your leadership style how did doing this make you feel?
4. Did the way that you led the group achieve the outcomes for which you hoped?
5. Would you now change anything in the way that you led the group?

If participants have not led a Christian group before, ask them to reflect on areas where they might have authority or a leadership role such as at home or at work. In these contexts:

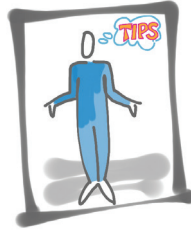
1. Do you have a preferred leadership style/way of doing things?
2. Do you ever have to vary how you behave in these contexts? If so, how does that make you feel?
3. How do you feel others around you react to the way you behave in these contexts?
4. Would you want to change anything about the way you typically behave in/manage these contexts?

Explain to the group that we will be using our reflections here to start off our next session.

If you would like to do so, ask participants to complete the feedback sheet before they leave.

CLOSING PRAYER

As you finish the session you could conclude by either leading with a short prayer said by yourself, or by asking for a volunteer to do so. You could, of course, have a few moments of open prayer if it feels right. It is suggested that you finish by saying the Grace together or the Lord's Prayer.



SESSION THREE

The Role of the Facilitator

LEADERS NOTES

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD FACILITATOR?

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD FACILITATOR?

It is important to be reminded at this stage of some of the key thoughts about facilitation that are covered in the introduction to the Walking with God's People Pack:

- A Facilitator accompanies and supports the Group on the learning and growing journey.
- The Accompanyist wants those with whom they journey to be passionate about knowing Christ, so that they are helped to become really fully human and thus change the world through being themselves.
- He or she plans learning opportunities, sustaining an environment of trust and openness where everyone feels empowered and able to speak honestly.
- He or she will also be learning and growing with the group as their course or programme progresses.

A Facilitator is thought to have a particular set of personal qualities and skills:

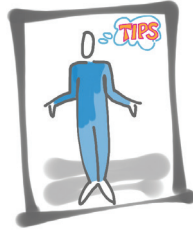
HUMBLE	SOMEONE WILLING TO LEARN FROM MISTAKES	AN UNDERSTANDING PERSON	A GOOD LISTENER
AN ENABLER	HAS A GENEROUS NATURE	DYNAMIC	IN CONTROL OF HIS/HER EMOTIONS
ACCEPTING	SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS	PATIENT	INCLUSIVE
CONFIDENT	AFFIRMING	KINDLY	MOTIVATING

An effective Facilitator is thought to operate in particular ways:

- Is well prepared
- Says clearly what to expect
- Sticks to times without being driven by it
- Is positive, committed & enthusiastic
- Encourages humour and respect
- Offers encouragement, praise & recognition
- Pays attention to participant reactions, moods, and attentiveness

- Understands that people like to learn in different ways
- Stays neutral and objective
- Paraphrases continuously (good at summarising others' ideas)
- Asks good probing questions
- Asks open ended and closed questions
- Asks questions using different formats

- Encourages participation
- Makes clear and timely summaries
- Moves smoothly to new topics
- Knows when to stop
- Listens actively
- Uses good body language
- Maintains eye contact
- Ensures a variety of activities are used



LEADERSHIP STYLES

The Handouts on facilitation and leadership styles that accompany this session contain so many ideas that there will not be enough time to cover them in depth. It will be important to encourage participants to use these sheets as they undertake the inter-sessional activity – the ideas can act as a touchstone or baseline that they can use to make the judgements called for by the activity.

Emotional intelligence (EI) lies at the heart of effective facilitation. Emotionally intelligent leaders recognise and understand their own behaviours and emotions and know how these impact on others. Once emotions and behaviours have been recognised, the leader can take control of and manage self in a way that allows them to behave in a way that optimises how others learn and grow. If you are not aware of self, you are unlikely to understand others.

The EI diagram on the Leadership Styles Handout is something to draw purposefully to the attention of those in your group – it is almost worth labouring the point to get it home. Most participants will have experienced working with a leader with high EI, and would be able to start to explain how it was that that particular leader made them feel good about being in that particular group. They will just as easily be able to describe a leader with poor EI and how that impacted negatively on the group.

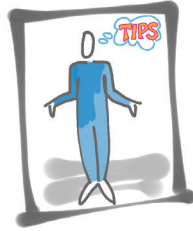
DIFFICULT MOMENTS

Sometimes the personal style of an individual or the role that they adopt during a session can get in the way of a group learning and making progress. So, too, can where the individual is on their faith journey, or if they come out with an idea that is very confused or even technically heretical!

Examples of difficult behaviours or other challenges a Facilitator might need to deal with:

- People pushing their points of view/ dominating the group
- People becoming angry, defensive and personal in response to other's ideas
- Negative body language like glaring/scowling and finger pointing
- Sarcastic or dismissive remarks
- People butting in/interrupting and criticising each other's ideas
- Quiet people shutting down to stay out of the conflict
- When someone is directly affected by the issue being discussed in the group, they may respond in a very personal or emotional way, or tend to dismiss the views of people that haven't had the same direct experience ('you don't really know what it is like')
- Long silences that seem to stretch on and on and make the Facilitator want to intervene
- People adopting the role of Challenger, Pessimist, Expert, Silent Disapprover, Distracter, Clown or Saboteur in the group

Different types of church tradition or theological position can cause difficult moments during Christian group discussion if two opposing but strongly held views are put forward. As a consequence, a group member's tradition or theological position might lead them to either be overly assertive or else to quickly take umbrage at what might be said by others. Similarly, a situation can arise where a lack of knowledge or understanding about the Bible leads the discussion into difficult places. So, too, a particular view of biblical inspiration could lead to people being overly assertive or unwilling to listen to the ideas of others (e.g. 'are you saying the Bible is just a story' or 'I can't believe that!').



SESSION THREE

The Role of the Facilitator

LEADERS NOTES

A REMINDER ABOUT LEARNING LOGS OR JOURNALS

James Fowler, a developmental psychologist at Candler School of Theology, famously proposed a series of stages of faith development (or spiritual development) across the life span of a person from childhood to adulthood. His thinking is closely related to the work of Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and Lawrence Kohlberg regarding aspects of psychological development in children and adults.

Some have since come to see his work as describing not necessarily just stages of faith development, but also as fixed ways of looking at faith & religion. In other words, some religious people might inhabit a faith world which is, for example, always at the synthetic-conventional stage. Others might inhabit a world of conjunctive faith – this could put them in conflict with those whose world is pre-dominantly synthetic-conventional.

1. Primal Faith: This is characteristic of infancy, is pre-linguistic and is formed within the primary caring relationships. In this stage, the seeds of trust, self-worth and hope are sown.
2. Intuitive-projective faith: Here the young child (aged 2-6) builds on language and imagination. At this stage, a child becomes aware of the sense of mystery and the numinous.
3. Mythic-literal faith: At this stage, typical of older children (aged 7-12), there is a firm grasp of cause and effect and the ability to test and change perceptions in the light of experience. Meaning is found in stories, although the interpretation of stories and beliefs tend to be literal.
4. Synthetic-conventional faith: This stage usually takes place in adolescence (aged 12- 17). This is linked to the establishment of personal identity and involves working at a set of unifying attitudes, beliefs and values which helps young people find support and a sense of who they are in relation to a peer group of similar beliefs and values. Stories and symbols are not reflected on in a critical way. Fowler argues that many adults do not move beyond this stage in their faith development.
5. Individuative-reflective faith: This is the young adult's stage (17-35), where attitudes are less dependent on others and demonstrate a capacity for self-reflective awareness. The emphasis is on autonomy. Symbols, stories and rituals are all subject to questioning and their meanings adapted
6. Conjunctive faith: Some adults in mid-life move beyond the previous stage. Truth is seen to be more complex and issues less clearly defined. Contradictory views can be held simultaneously to encompass truth. There is an avoidance of ideological overconfidence.
7. Universalising faith: This is a rare stage that few obtain. There is lack of concern for self and by a love of others grounded in the Being of God.

A REMINDER ABOUT LEARNING LOGS OR JOURNALS

A learning log or journal might be a specially structured notebook that has been designed to go with a particular course or study guide or it might just be a simple notebook.

Good facilitators are reflective thinkers and learners. They take the time to look back and to identify and note what they have learned so they can think about and act on the learning. Using a learning log might be a new and novel idea for some in the group that takes a little getting used to. You may need to encourage people to persevere. Explain that writing down what I have learned helps to:

1. Crystallise my thinking
2. Fix it in my memory
3. Creates a record to which I can refer when I want
4. Map my learning and identify success

Participants could be asked to reflect prayerfully on what they have written in preparation for coming to the next session.



A Facilitator accompanies & supports the Group on the learning & growing journey. He or she plans learning opportunities, sustaining an environment of trust and openness where everyone feels empowered and able to speak honestly.

THE EFFECTIVE FACILITATOR...

- Is well prepared
- Says clearly what to expect
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- Moves smoothly to new topics
- Knows when to stop
- Listens actively
- Uses good body language
- Maintains eye contact
- Ensures a variety of activities are used

THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOW SOMEONE MIGHT LEARN IN A CLASSROOM OR WHEN PART OF A FACILITATED GROUP

TEACHING & CLASS

- The teacher has a formal & superior status
- The teacher has knowledge or skills to impart to others
- Often passive learning
- There is a set curriculum to be learned
- There tend to be 'right answers'

LEARNING SUPPORTED BY FACILITATION

- The Facilitator & Group share equal status - mutual respect
- The Group has knowledge from which we can all learn.
- We explore actively together
- We have agreed what we want to learn or the skills we want to develop.
- There's a real exchange of views

THE GOOD FACILITATOR...

HUMBLE	SOMEONE WILLING TO LEARN FROM MISTAKES	AN UNDERSTANDING PERSON	A GOOD LISTENER
AN ENABLER	HAS A GENEROUS NATURE	DYNAMIC	IN CONTROL OF HIS/HER EMOTIONS
ACCEPTING	SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS	PATIENT	INCLUSIVE
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FACILITATORS NOT TO BE...

- **The Drill Sergeant**—the Facilitator who is rigidly stuck on the agenda and puts the clock above content
- **The Guardian**—the Facilitator who makes certain that all conversation goes through him or her and not from participant to participant
- **The Know-it-all**—The Facilitator who always has the answer. The know-it-all can't say "I don't know."
- **The Ice Cube**—the distant and aloof Facilitator who is unwilling to personalise the experience
- **The Blabber**—the Facilitator who loves the sound of his or her own voice.
- **The Pretender**—the Facilitator who doesn't ask real questions, but only "pretense questions" that are really designed to give the Facilitator an excuse to pontificate.
- **The "I Can't Hear You" Person**—the Facilitator who refuses to listen
- **The Long Distance Runner**—the Facilitator who piles activities on top of one another, doesn't allow for breaks, and ignores the need for groups to reflect on a topic or idea
- **The Parrot**—the Facilitator who relentlessly recaps information, restates ideas, and summarises the obvious
- **The Plodder**—the Facilitator who is painfully slow and doesn't have a feel for pacing, variety, or style
- **The Passenger**—the Facilitator who lets people talk too long and gives up the reins of facilitation,
- **The Storyteller**—the Facilitator who tells far too many stories and never really gets to the content.
- **The Centerpiece**—the Facilitator who makes himself or herself the real content of the workshop
- **The Tunnel Driver**—the Facilitator who keeps doing the same thing hour after hour



The Accompanyist wants those with whom they journey to be passionate about knowing Christ, so that they are helped to become really fully human and thus change the world through being themselves.

There have been many different models that try to capture how leaders work.

How might the following way of looking at what leaders do help us with understanding how a good facilitator needs to work? Do you recognise yourself here at all?

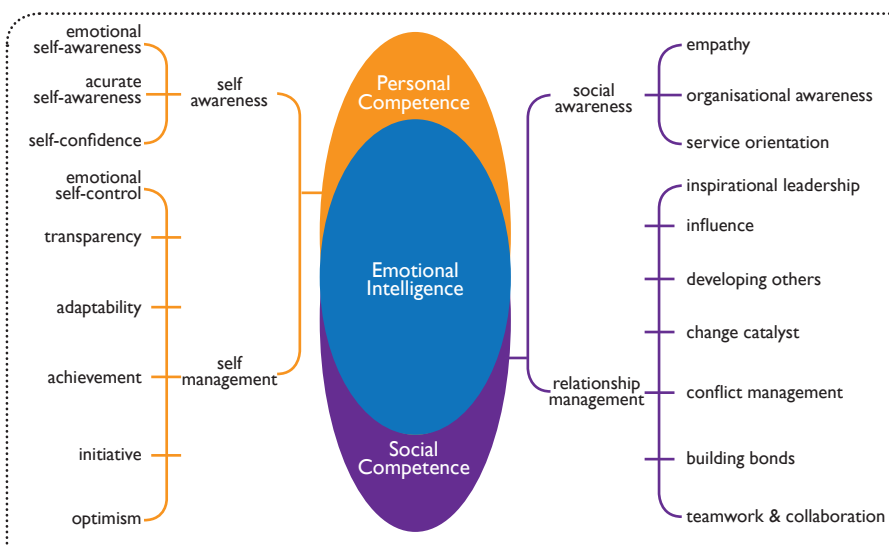
	Autocratic (Domineering, Dictatorial)	Authoritative (Definite, Yet Responsive)	Democratic (Group-Centred)	Laissez-Faire (Permissive, Passive)
1	Total control with members as listeners and followers	Strong control, with members actively involved in discussions	Shared control with leader and members sharing functions and decisions	Minimal control with members directing
2	Determines goals and policies, and wants the group to choose the goal he or she has chosen	Has a definite purpose and plan but open to modification	Shares leadership	Doesn't prepare and lets things drift
3	More interested in subject matter (content) than with people (process)	Active and energetic and seeks the activity of others	Believes in other people	Doesn't seem to care
4	Makes decisions regardless of other viewpoints	Prepared to give direction and support as needed	Creates a sense of security and belonging in the group	Causes the group to accomplish very little
5	Talks too much	Uses communication skills to involve others	Ensures that other members have opportunity of leadership	Encourages fragmentation through indiscipline and unreliability
6	Focuses attention on him or herself	Takes responsibility until others can assume it	The Leader's withdrawal will not mean that the group will fall apart	Makes no attempt to appraise or regulate the course of events
7	Group members are always puppets	Uses personal power to empower others. Asks others to take functions	All policies are a matter of group discussion, encouraged and assisted by the leader	Lacks courage in making decisive plans
In a Bible Study or Christian Learning Group				
8	Asks and answers all questions	Prepares and asks questions; members respond and discuss	May ask others to lead discussion; leadership may be passed round the group	Asks one vague or general question then is silent

Taken from The Small Group Leader by John Mallison (1996)

This model sees strengths in all 6 approaches. Which style is more naturally yours?

STYLE	FEATURES
Coercive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The coercive style is used when you need to get immediate compliance. It is useful when time is short, there is an emergency or when people need quick & simple instructions. If this style is over-used people get fed up with it as it disempowers people.
Authoritative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authoritative style is used when you want to get people on board with new ideas and set the direction of the team. The Authoritative Leader is communicating a vision and selling its benefits so that people are clear about the objectives and their part in them. This style helps you achieve clarity in the organisation.
Affiliative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The affiliative style promotes harmony. The focus is on the well-being of the team and building good relationships. In a crisis, the prior use of this style means that the leader can draw upon the positive relationships that have been fostered. Used exclusively, this style can prevent difficult performance issues being addressed and can get in the way of achieving high standards long-term.
Democratic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The democratic approach involves others in the decision making process – it delegates responsibility and taps creativity. It gives people real ownership of the team's work and builds team spirit. You need to give people clear parameters within which to make their decisions. It is not a good approach to use in a crisis.
Pacesetting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pacesetting approach is used when the objective is to achieve an immediate task to a very high standard. It involves leading by example and the leader modelling how things should be done. Leaders who prefer this approach often find it very difficult to delegate as they worry about whether the standard can be achieved if just left to someone else. When used as a preferred approach people can feel inadequate or overused.
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching is a great approach when the long term objective is the development of the team. The leader helps team members identify areas for development and is willing to delegate to individuals to help them gain new knowledge & skills. People are challenged and supported through coaching and mentoring. This is an effective style but is time consuming & risks a dip in standards whilst the team is learning.

Received wisdom is that, although leaders have a preferred leadership style with at least one strong supplementary approach, 'flexing' or making use of all of the styles at appropriate moments is how good leaders operate.



How might an understanding of emotional intelligence help a Facilitator?

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT LEADERS

1. Recognise their own emotions and label them accurately.
2. Understand their own emotions and become better at controlling them & their impact on others.
3. Are then able to increase their behaviour options in different situations.
4. Use this increased awareness and self-control to work with and through others to achieve their own goals and those of their team.
5. Continue to develop personal self-awareness, recognising there is always the potential for something new and unexpected to happen.

HOW THE FACILITATOR SHOULD APPROACH DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS AND ISSUES

- Try to stay impartial when there are disagreements. The Facilitator's role is to assist the discussion and draw out the different viewpoints, not to come down in favour of one of them. If there are strong differences, summarise and move on.
- Conflict is OK if it's focused on the issue not the person. Everyone has to feel safe about expressing their views, even if they are unpopular.
- Slow things down and stay calm.
- Emphasise listening.
- Create closure – assist people to close discussion on an issue and move on.
- Ensure the group deals with issues such as respect and confrontation as part of its 'ground rules' for working together.

Create a secure and comfortable environment for participants to express their views:

- **Avoid** a sense of competition
- **Ensure** participants have opportunities to identify issues or ideas they don't understand
- **Value** participants and their views
- **Learn** people's names and use them (name tags can help).
- **Draw conclusions/summarise** discussion based on people's contributions.
- **Don't allow** others to interrupt while someone is speaking.

Those theological, way-off interpretation of scripture or churchmanship based difficult moments:

1. Honour the speaker by listening to the question or the point being made.
2. Don't immediately squash the point or brush aside the question.
3. Reflect back what you are hearing to make sure that you understand the question or the viewpoint.
4. Remind everyone that intelligent & faithful people can and will disagree with each other from time to time on these kinds of issues. Such disagreements do not reflect one's lack of faith.
5. With the permission of the speaker, turn the question over to the larger group for discussion so all participants have an opportunity to share their thoughts, insights or similar questions.
6. Work to maintain a level of respect and consideration in the group and for each other which is rooted in a shared faith and God's love. Harmony is more important than 'resolving' intellectual differences.

DEALING WITH OVERLY DOMINANT PEOPLE

- Be open from the start, and say there is a common problem in all learning circles – some people talk a lot while others stay silent. Emphasise that we learn both by listening and talking, and we all need to talk and we all need to listen.
- Reinforce alternative behaviour.
- Give turns. This is the most common technique to encourage involvement and prevent one or two people dominating. Say politely, 'you have already spoken on this issue, let's hear from someone else who has not yet had a chance.'
- Hold the conch: let the group choose an object (a ball, book, pen or whatever) that gives authority to speak. Only the person who holds it may talk; others must wait. When finished, the speaker hands it to someone else. This promotes the idea of taking turns and listening, regulates itself, draws attention to who talks and who does not, reduces interruptions, and can give time and confidence to some who otherwise might have stayed silent.
- Recognise those who tend to dominate and give them responsible roles. For example, make those who dominate recorders and observers.
- You can ration remarks by everyone, by giving each member of the group five or more match sticks (or stones or seeds). Each time a person speaks they put one of the matchsticks into the centre. When they have none left they cannot say any more in that session.

WORKING WITH SHY OR QUIET PEOPLE

1. Try to involve everyone in the discussion – if this isn't happening naturally, try something like 'let's get the full range of views in the group on this issue'.
2. If some people tend to dominate, try 'those are interesting points. Let's go round and see what others think'.
3. Encourage them individually, within and outside of the group.
4. Establish reasons for their silence.
5. Give notice of the topic before the discussion, so that they have time to prepare.
6. Give them responsibility for note-taking and feedback.
7. Encourage the group to act supportively at all times and model this yourself.
8. Give them time.
9. Consider using role-play to build up confidence and skills.

SILENCE

Pauses and silences are OK. They probably mean people are thinking. Count to at least 10 before trying to answer your own questions to the group, and don't rush to fill the quiet moments. As the leader, you have been able to think through questions and issues ahead of time. Participants, however, may be encountering the ideas for the first time so need the space to formulate answers.

STOCK TAKE EXERCISE

- Choose an unfinished sentence appropriate to the aim of the exercise.
- Ask each person to complete the sentence in a few words.
- Ensure everyone has a turn, then summarise the responses and, with the group, address any issues that arise.

EXAMPLES:

- 'Right now I feel...'
- 'The thing I find hardest to understand is...'
- 'I would like to change...'

OR

- Say to the group, 'Choose one word that explains what is happening for you right now' and go round the group getting responses.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

STEP ONE: get things out in the open. This involves listening to people so that they feel heard and any built-up emotions are diffused. People are rarely ready to move on to solutions until their emotional blocks have been removed.

STEP TWO: resolve the issue. Involve people in solving the 'problem'. Once emotions have been aired, you might choose among several basic approaches to resolve the underlying issue:

- Ignore the conflict in the hope that it will go away. Keep quiet and don't encourage the discussion, or try to change the subject.
- Ask people to be more tolerant and accept each other's views.
- Look for middle ground between highly polarised views.
- Use a structured approach like force-field analysis to analyse the issues.

THE BIBLE OFTEN PRODUCES STRONG EMOTIONS IN PEOPLE

Even those who have not read a Bible in years may be surprised at how strong their opinions about the Bible can be. Don't get caught out if people in your group disagree about various aspects of the Bible or terms like 'inspiration' or 'authority'. For instance, participants may have very different, though equally strong, opinions about how we talk about the Bible being 'true' or whether 'story' is a sufficient word to describe and engage with Scripture. You might hear a question like, 'Are you saying the Bible is just a story?'

Name Date

PLEASE WRITE A SENTENCE OR TWO OR SOME BULLET POINTS IN RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

■ What went well in today's session?

.....

.....

.....

■ Today's session would have been even better if ...

.....

.....

.....

■ What did you learn in this session about yourself? What difference will it make do you think?

.....

.....

.....

■ What did you learn in this session which will most help you as either a leader or member of a Christian study/learning group?

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■ In what way(s) do you hope to use your learning for the wider benefit of the church?

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■ Is there anything else you need to note down about what you have learned or how you intend to follow up?

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