



WHY ARE FACILITATION SKILLS IMPORTANT FOR US?

Whether it's a meeting or a training session, someone has to shape and guide the process of working together so that you meet your goals and accomplish what you've set out to do. The facilitator needs to concentrate on how you are going to move through your agenda and meet those goals effectively.

Specifically, to help participants focus on the learning process, the facilitator must stay neutral and actively work to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable participating and learning and there is a structure that allows for everyone's ideas to be heard and feel good about their contribution.

A Tabono CBA specialist can help you learn and practice effective facilitation skills.

Many techniques and approaches can be used by facilitators to create a positive learning environment and encourage participation and active learning. Below you will find some key tips that facilitators may find helpful.

HOW CAN A FACILITATOR CREATE A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT?

A skilled facilitator can create a positive learning environment that helps participants feel comfortable and be receptive to learn new information and skills. Here are a few points to remember that will help to maximize your role as a facilitator:

- ⌘ Be flexible and natural When people are connected to you, they are more likely to listen and participate.
- ⌘ Watch the group's body language Watch for the messages people send with their body language and adjust (are they bored, confused, excited, tired?).
- ⌘ Be aware of your own behavior Take a break to calm down if you feel nervous or are losing control. Watch that you're not repeating yourself, saying "ah" between each word, or speaking too fast. Watch your voice and physical manner.
- ⌘ Occupy your hands Hold onto a marker, chalk, or the back of a chair. Don't play with the change in your pocket!
- ⌘ Watch your speech Be careful you are not offending or alienating anyone in the group. Use swear words at your own risk!
- ⌘ Use body language of our own Moving up close to a shy, quiet participant and asking them to speak may make them feel more willing. Walking around engages people in the process.
- ⌘ Don't talk to the wall, newsprint, or board Always wait until you have stopped writing and are facing the group to talk.

HOW CAN A FACILITATOR ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION?

A skilled facilitator can encourage participants to ask questions and share their ideas and experiences to further their understanding of the information. This active learning also makes it easier for participants to assimilate new ideas and behaviors. Here are a few more tips to increase your effectiveness as a facilitator:

- 🗨️ Ask questions instead of making statements. “Who knows how HIV is transmitted?” instead of “HIV is transmitted from the exchange of semen, blood, vaginal secretions or breast milk.”
- 🗨️ Ask open-ended instead of close-ended questions. “What are people thinking right now?” instead of “Are there any questions (a “yes” or “no” question)?”
- 🗨️ Encourage participants to share their experiences. “Would somebody in the group be willing to share their experience in talking to their child about HIV prevention?”
- 🗨️ **Phrase a person’s question or statement in your own words.** This does two things. First it helps you make sure you understood the question and second it buys you some time to think about how you will answer the question.
- 🗨️ Use reflection and empathy. By reflecting or empathizing with people’s ideas, you show support and have an opportunity to clarify. “It sounds like you really enjoyed that talk with your daughter.”
- 🗨️ Generalize information. If several people talk about the amount of sexual content on television, the facilitator can ask, “So what can we say about television’s influence on our behavior, if anything?” Are we able to come up with a principle or lesson from what a participant(s) has said?
- 🗨️ Help the group apply skills you practice in a workshop to real life. If you conduct a role-play about communication, ask the audience how a real-life situation would be different from the role-play. How could the skills and or information you learned tonight be used at home?
- 🗨️ Do not be afraid of silence. Silence may mean that the group is thinking about what you asked. Some trainers believe that the facilitator should not break the silence until 11 seconds have passed.
- 🗨️ Get the audience to make judgmental statements instead of you. If someone says, “I think people with HIV shouldn’t have sex.” Ask the audience, “What do the rest of you think about that?” More likely than not, someone will offer a different opinion and participants can have their own debate.
- 🗨️ Use stories to illustrate points. Use a personal story, or a story from your community or another group to make a point. People relate well to stories. Remember to keep the CONFIDENTIALITY of the person about which you share a story.
- 🗨️ Help the group interpret their statement. “What do you mean by...?” “So, is that a good thing or a bad thing?”