

Glen

## FACILITATORS NOTES

Facilitating means to host, encourage, clarify and focus. Here are some helpful hints.

**DON'T MAKE STATEMENTS** As a facilitator you are not a participant. You are there to facilitate others. Only in the most extreme situations do you give up your neutrality on the issues being discussed..

**ASK QUESTIONS** And keep asking them. We want to find out what people think. We want to investigate the issues. Your goal is to help group members explore their own and others feelings and ideas by asking them the right questions.

**KEEP TRACK OF THE STAGE OF THE DISCUSSION PROCESS** You should have decided the general structure of the process before you start. For example: experiences--common themes--general principals, or brainstorming---selection of ideas---prioritizing for implementation, or evaluation---future goals---action planning, etc. If people are allowed to mix stages, for example talking about evaluation and action planning at the same time things will bog down and seem to go nowhere.

**TELL PEOPLE THE STAGE OF THE DISCUSSION** Let people know where the discussion is going, where it is now and where we have come from. That will help to focus them and give them a sense of the movement. Tell them when there is a shift in topic taking place. eg We've talked about peoples experiences. Are there any commonalities in what's been hapening to us? Gently let people know if they are off topic. Remind them regularly what the topic is.

**CLARIFY AND BRIDGE** "So you think we should.... Is that right? What do others think of that idea?"

**ITS A PARTY. YOU'RE THE HOST** Make sure that everyone is comfortable and feels at home. Keep it up-beat. Attend to the mood of the group.

**KEEP YOUR COOL** People will say the most outlandish things--racist, sexist, off the wall. You are not a policeman. It is often best to let this kind of thing pass and build on the positive. If it needs to be challenged encourage others to challenge it. If you come down too heavy, it will tend to produce an atmosphere where others who have important and intelligent things to say will be intimidated because you might go after them too.

**BE PREPARED** Have on paper the names of anyone you might have to thank or introduce, the stages of the meeting with possible questions you might ask and a list of your reponsibilities.

**BE FLEXIBLE** Things might take off in an unexpected direction. Try to steer them in the way you planned but if you can't and your trying seems to generate resistance let things take their course. Be there to help offer direction when the group decides it needs it again.

**TONE** Any kind of sarcasm is a big no-no. Never put people down. Criticize what they say, not who they are. Be humble. Remember you are in a position of power so it's easy to look arrogant.