

FACILITATING TIPS: FOSTERING NEUTRALITY

PURPOSE: To appreciate the impact of taking a neutral stance to facilitate progress in a group.

CONTEXT: This is perhaps the most difficult and contentious meta-skill to adopt, particularly when you have an agenda which needs to be met. As we are exploring and surfacing different agendas, we cannot facilitate progress without at least someone in the group adopting a neutral stance.

THINGS TO TRY:

A way of doing this in the moment is to try to see yourself moving from one position to another - i.e. from a position of leader/ teacher/typical facilitator to a *process* facilitator. For a moment, give yourself permission to see it as your job/role to facilitate the process, rather than the outcome. Pretend you are wearing different hats and see yourself swapping hats or stepping out of one position and into the other.

Name to the group that you are swapping hats or Move to another position in the room

Tell the group that you are swapping hats and moving into neutral facilitator stance. As long as you are clear in yourself and clearly state which position you are coming from, the group participants will accept you. However, if you in any way try to use the neutral facilitator position stance to fulfil your requirements or agenda, i.e. lose neutrality for your own intent, the group will totally reject you! In fact, you will lose their trust and they will begin to attack you. Be warned!

Once you've moved to a neutral facilitator position, it's best not to move in and out of this role too much in the moment.

Trust that your personal views, as roles in the system, will be held and stated by someone else in the group. They will not state the role exactly as you would have, but they will express the view in some way.¹

Ideally the more people that feel comfortable with stepping into the neutral facilitator role, the more flexible and responsive the group can be, with different people taking up the role when it suits them, the scenario, or their style. This frees everyone up to be able to take a stance sometimes, and facilitate at other times.

¹ Lewis. M. Deep Democracy