

FACILITATING TIPS: LEARNING TO TURN THE HEAT UP OR DOWN

PURPOSE: to give tips on how to facilitate or work with conflict in the moment

CONTEXT: Conflict is an asset to a group when used productively. This information sheet will give you tips on how to recognise when you need to raise the heat, and when to turn it down to make it useful for the group.

1. WHEN AND HOW TO TURN THE HEAT UP

Keeping systems and people in a learning space to allow adaptive work to happen requires us to know when and how to turn up the heat:

- Long statements often cause people to disengage and lose the juice in it. Get to the crux of what is being said by shortening/amplifying.
- Stay neutral
- Making an observation - getting people to see what they are doing. This increases the heat – be careful to remain neutral
- Weather report - Bring awareness of what is going on in the group right now.
- Speak personally – speak from the 1st person – “get skin in the game”
- Spreading the NO – spending time with difficult voice in the room – especially if you are in a place of authority
- Using silences - Giving airtime will increase heat

2. WHEN AND HOW TO TURN THE HEAT DOWN.

Turn the heat down when you see Escalation signals:

- Accusations of each other become increasingly stronger
- The two sides move towards one another
- Non-verbal signs of mounting tension (clenched fists, flushed faces)
- Voices get louder
- Sarcasm

What to do, without disrupting the learning:

- Remember your purpose
- Weather reporting what is going on can turn the heat down – name what is happening without judgement. Eg ‘I notice that our voices are getting louder’

- Honing and working with the 'no' role (the person against the majority) or minority position is a way to stabilise the system. The person with most authority or facilitating the collaboration is responsible for keeping the minority voice safe
- Attack usually gets placed with one person or role, try and spread the role e.g. "who else feels like this". If no-one picks it up, take it up yourself eg. 'I know a part of me often feels...'
- Make Systemic interpretations to move away from the personal – e.g. Joe doesn't get on with Mary - look at what is happening in the system. What roles are emerging? (take the personal out of it)
- Consciousness decisions: Getting people to realise what decision they are making in the moment or reminding people that a decision has not been made
- Notice and process signs of trauma and when there is strong emotion and conflict. Signs that may indicate trauma could be people 'freezing', glazed look in their eyes, shaking or generally not being fully present. When someone is attacked for something they are unconscious of they will react and find it impossible to defend themselves. Make sure the person affected has someone to be with them the moment it happens, ideally get them to a quiet place outside the group and have someone sit with them to talk about what happened. Check in about the ongoing support they have around them. Bring the group back to the role of trauma in the system. What does this mean for us and the system?

Check for de-escalation signals and bring awareness to them when they occur

- Both sides appear to be frightened
- Voices getting softer
- People look down or away
- The two sides step back from one another