GERRI KING Ph.D.
HUMAN DYNAMICS ASSOCIATES, INC.

Facilitation Handbook

© Gerri King, Ph.D.

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Dr. King presents on a wide range of topics including team building, resolving conflicts, effective communication, motivating employees, the dynamics of change, reducing stress, why people avoid success, and the changing role of leadership. She facilitates strategic planning, mergers and acquisitions, staff and administrative retreats, collaborative efforts, and mission & vision development.

Gerri is the author of *The Duh! Book of Management & Supervision: Dispelling Common Leadership Myths* and the founding partner and President of the 30 year old Human Dynamics Associates in Concord NH. www.gerriking.com.

Facilitation Skills

Which of these issues

concern you as a group facilitator or coach?

In other words, do you anticipate finding
any of these difficult to deal with in your role?

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1. ☐ Maintaining confidentiality when important.

2. ☐ Enhancing group cohesion.

3. ☐ Creating an atmosphere of safety.

4. ☐ Helping the group to set goals where appropriate.

5. ☐ Being accepting of all members of the group.

6. ☐ Being non-judgmental.

7. ☐ Being unthreatened in your role of facilitator.

8. ☐ Being a listener rather than teacher, when teaching is not appropriate.

9. ☐ Creating a facilitative structure and/or format.

10. ☐ Working with sub-group members so that participation is enhanced.

11. ☐ Attending to process when it is more appropriate than attending to content.

12. ☐ Not being threatening to the group members.

13. ☐ Managing threat levels between group members.

14. ☐ When you need help, going to your colleagues and presenting problems honestly.

15. ☐ Feeling secure in the position of facilitator.

16. ☐ Managing your personal issues as they come up.

17. ☐ Creating an atmosphere of openness.

18. ☐ Having a clear sense of your approach.

19. ☐ Dealing with resistance from members.

20. ☐ Allowing the group to interact without your input when appropriate.

21. ☐ Managing conflict

22. ☐ Other

My Skills *Facilitator*

• I rise early...
• talk a blue streak
• cook
• write great letters
• swat mosquitoes

Comments
on Facilitation Issues

Confidentiality is maintained unless someone is in danger or it is absolutely necessary to share the information. It is best to ensure you will inform people if their confidence must be broken and invite them to be part of the process when possible.

Group cohesion does not happen immediately. Try to be comfortable with the time it takes.

Safety is essential to all human beings and is created through mutual respect, lack of judgment and open communication.

Goal-setting like any changes, should be a process of the entire group whenever possible.

Acceptance is the foundation of safety and trust. Where acceptance is lacking, communication must be enhanced

Being non-judgmental is difficult because we all hold judgments. It is more important that we know what they are so that we can manage, challenge and/or deal with them.

Being unthreatened in a role as facilitator is ours to deal with; it is not for the group members "to fix". That is why we need mentors, colleagues and others for support and to help us work through defensiveness.

Listening, as well as teaching is the facilitator's responsibility. The facilitator should always be in a learning mode. Focused listening is the ultimate gift to your members.

Creating a facilitative structure is a function of a belief in equality; thus, don't feel you have to do it alone. Invite the group to co-create an inclusive environment.

Sub-groups will allow shy people to participate in ways that are difficult in the larger group. However, always bring the information back to the entire membership.

Process vs. content requires a continual shift in focus. Content refers to the facts and information being exchanged. Process is how the exchange is being done. Process is too often neglected. Sometimes one has to leave content and focus entirely on the process of the group

Not being threatening can be better ensured when the facilitator believes in equality, shared power, the expertise of others and trusts the group. It is often stated that the members must trust the facilitator. It is equally important that the facilitator trust the members.

Managing threat levels among group members is essential to safety. It is the main reason to have ground rules based on mutual respect from the outset. It is very helpful for facilitators to have conflict resolution training so that they become more comfortable in conflictual situations and so that they are able to diffuse an escalation.

Asking for help is so important and should be done by everyone in a facilitation role. It's best to have an on-going support system in place.

Feeling secure happens internally. Do whatever is necessary to enhance your own self-esteem. And allow yourself the freedom to make mistakes.

Managing personal issues requires us to have a place to do that so we can temporarily "put them away" while with the group.

more comments....

An atmosphere of openness	is modeled and invited by the facilitator. However, everyone has his or her own pace for sharing openly. Individual style must be respected.
Understanding one's own facilitation style	and sharing it with the group clarifies many unanswered questions and, again, invites members to do the same.
Resistance	is normal as articulated in the conflict resolution section. In all resistance is important information regarding where people are, i.e. encourage respectful resistance and it will be reduced.
Allowing the group autonomy	is the most trusting statement you can make.
Managing conflict	requires you to understand your own conflict resolution style; share with others and encourage them to do the same. Continually work on the issues conflict raises and people will be less likely to feel a need for aggressive confrontation.

How Facilitators
Motivate and Empower

(based, in part, on the work of Paul Hersey)

- Instead of controlling behavior, empower and motivate people.

- Empower and motivate through trust.

- Establish trustworthiness before events test it.

- Uphold the dignity of people.

- Whenever given the chance, be a model follower yourself.

- Tailor your messages to key niches within the group.

- Empower everyone despite role, gender or experience.

- Cultivate the effective flow of lateral and vertical communication.

- Only give feedback that people can do something about.

- In addition to the group trusting you, you must trust the group.

The Job of the Facilitator

- Realizes that team members need to be *allowed* to be productive rather than *made* to be productive. It is why the title is "facilitator" rather than "director".

- Actively encourages, channels and invites the participation of others.

- Creates a trusting environment.

- Is focused completely on the team and its members.

- Understands and expects the group to go through the predictable stages.

- Is comfortable facilitating conflict resolution.

- Is non-judgmental.

- Becomes skilled at group dynamics and knowledgeable about when to intervene.

- Is seen as "part of" the team rather than "in charge" of it.

- Is self-aware of own issues, biases and style.

- Is not to have a stake in the outcome; but *is* to keep track of the process.

The Job of the Coach

- Helps group members develop their full potential.

- Helps groups learn how to work together effectively.

- Encourages people to take and be given as much responsibility, authority and autonomy as they can handle.

- Focuses both on individuals and the group and organization as a whole.

- Gives support rather than advice whenever possible.

- Helps individuals and groups solve their own problems rather than solving them for the group.

- Doesn't take personal responsibility for the problem, but helps the group through the proper steps leading to solution.

- Helps people learn how to learn and retrieve needed information.

- Is non-judgmental.

- Coaches for success prior to action rather than after the failure.

- Asks questions that set the tone for self empowerment. Does not question, however, in a way that appears parental. For example, may ask "What is the problem you want to solve?" rather than "Do you know what's wrong here?"

- Does not coach from a place of power. In fact, if the coach is also a supervisor of the group members, she or he is playing a dual role that interferes with both responsibilities.

- Is self-aware of own issues, biases and style.

- Eventually works her or his way out of a job.

The Empowered Approach to Teamwork, Decision-Making & Problem Solving

Self-Directed Teams

A *self-directed team* is a group of interdependent people who are responsible for managing themselves and the work they do. They set their own goals, in cooperation with management, and the team plans how to achieve those goals and how their work is to be accomplished. The team's central organizing factor is that it has a common purpose and measurable goals for which the team can be held accountable, independent of its individual members. Employees on a self-directed team handle a wide array of functions and work with a minimum of direct supervision. (from Teaming Up by D. Ray & H. Bronstein, McGraw-Hill, 1995.)

Mary's famous self-directed "S" team
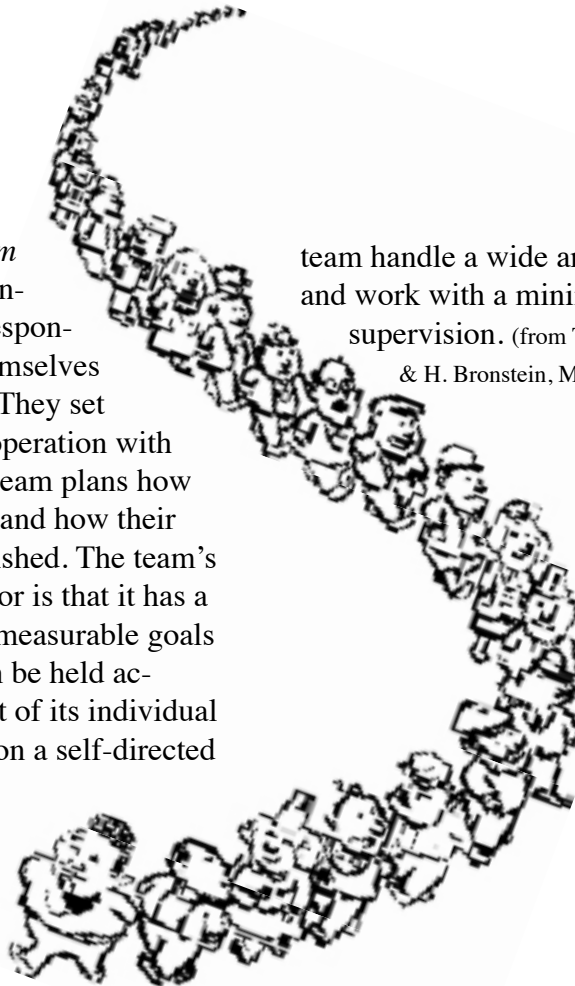
Situations when joint decision-making can be a disadvantage:
- When time is of the essence or the solution is simple enough that the other team members trust one person to forge ahead.
- Individual issues are sometimes better solved unilaterally.
- If confidentiality is an issue, it may be impossible to include others.
- Immediate demands may take precedence, but follow-up communication to the team members is mandatory.

Advantages of problem-solving and decision-making within the team concept:

- More heads are better than one if the problem is complicated and would benefit from diverse input.
- Joint ownership means a better chance of achieving joint commitment.
- Quality is improved as a result of a variety of perspectives and increased responsibility.
- Morale is increased.
- Cohesion and communication improves.
- Rather than simply helping others when asked, people begin noticing when someone is in need and offer help because everyone has a stake in things going well.
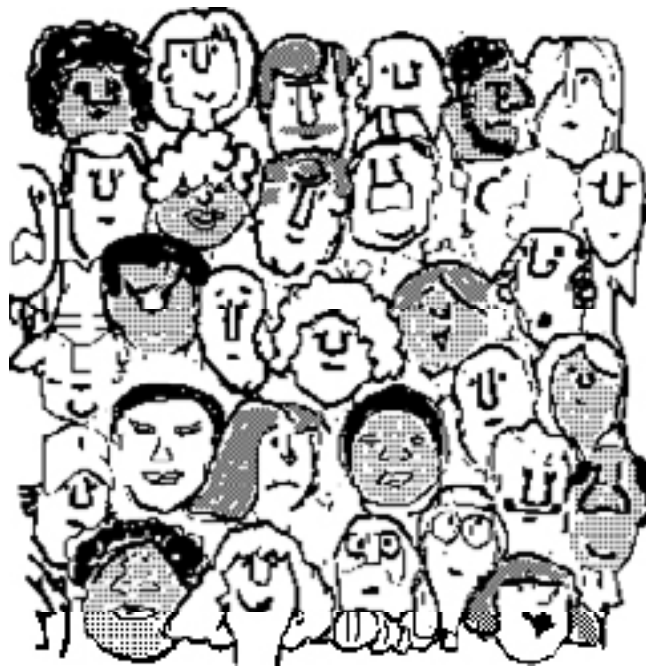
Characteristics
of an Effective Group

- Clear goals and a shared vision.
- Cooperative leadership.
- Appreciation of group development.
- Appreciation and use of diversity among the team members.
- Creative conflict management.
- An ability to accommodate change.
- Ability to problem solve.
- Incentives that pertain to the individual but enhance the group.
- Involvement and energy.
- Open, honest and respectful communication.
- Shared meaning.
- Flexibility (consistency being present in on-going support).
- An ability and invitation to work with other teams and departments.
- Individual and group competency and responsi-bility.
- A safe and trusting environment.
- More fun times.

Effective Communication As The Basis For Empowered Interaction

One of life's most crucial skills is the ability to clearly communicate. Communication, is a two-way street requiring the ability to listen as well as to talk. Being assertive and making sure your ideas are heard are certainly goals, but unless there can be a meaningful interchange the end result will be less than satisfactory.

This following section covers some of the basics for effective communication.

Listening Techniques

Good Listening Requires:

- A desire to listen
- Preparation for listening
- A show of interest and bei[ng] ested
- Being respectful and maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Focusing attention
- Waiting—thinking—responding when ready and/or appropriate
- Repeating or paraphrasing: checking out
- Giving advice only when appropriate
- Giving hope truthfully
- Being honest
- Observing physical energy, body language
- Observing incongruency
- Suspending one's frame of reference or judgment
- Sharing of self but only when appropriate
- Empathizing and showing warmth
- Offering a calm response
- Listening carefully: **Active Listening**
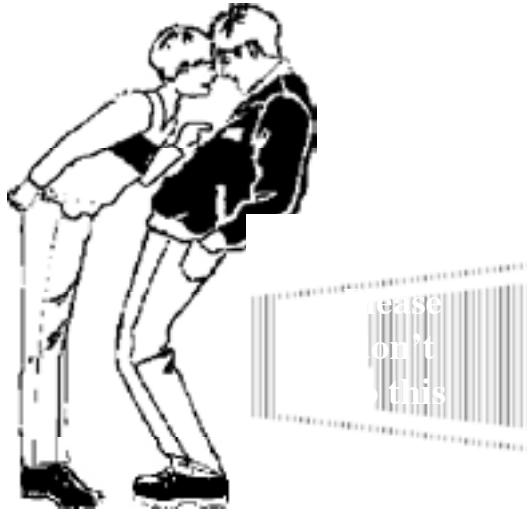
Please try this instead!

Active Listening!

• Show understanding and acceptance by verbal and non-verbal behavior: tone of voice; facial expressions; gestures; eye contact; posture.
• Put yourself in the other person's place to understand what the person is saying and how s/he feels.
• Restate the person's most important thoughts and feelings.
• Do not interrupt, offer advice, or give suggestions. Do not bring up similar feelings and problems from your own experience.
• Clarify and check out communication.
• Be supportive.
• Summarize by highlighting the main points, feelings and ideas.

"I" vs. "You"
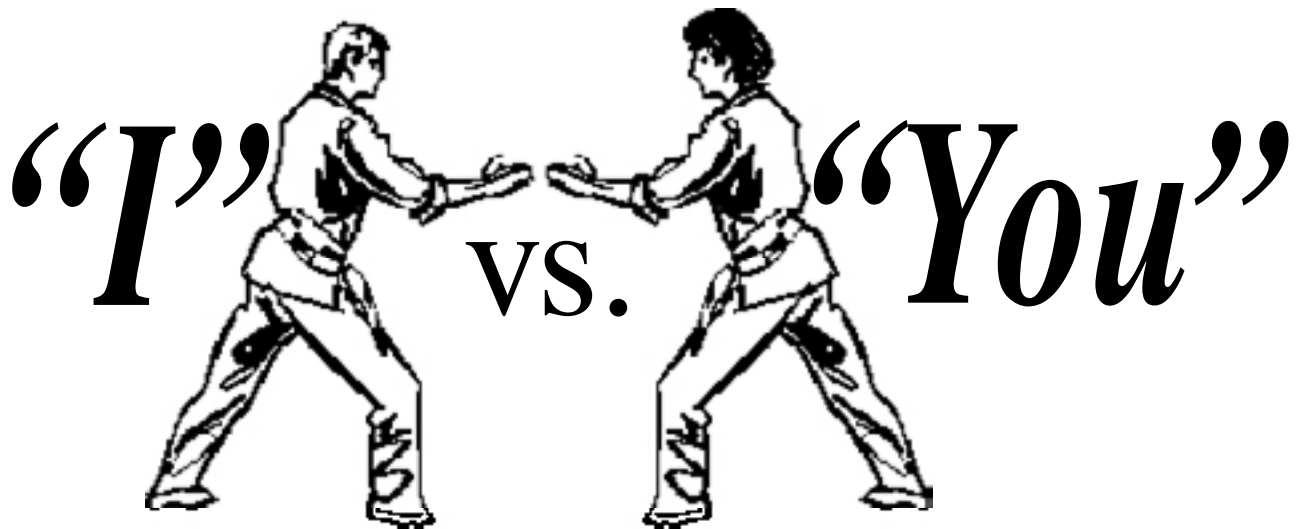
Using "I" versus "You" Messages

• "I" messages express opinions, thoughts, beliefs and assertions in a way that maximizes the possibilities for creative collaborative problem-solving.

• "I" messages give the other person information that is necessary to enable her or him to participate in the problem-solving process.

• "You" messages put people on the defensive because they are a form of attack.

1 • Background. Your best sense of
 • what happened.
 • who did what, when and where.
 • how often.
 • other background factors that may be influencing the situation.

2 • Feelings. How you feel
 • as you're talking to the person now.
 • about the situation you're describing.
 • how you felt at the time of the original event.

3 • Tangible Effects and Consequences. They explain
 • why you believe the situation is important.
 • tangible outcomes and later implications of the situation that the other person might not be aware of.
 • general impact.

Some Criteria For Giving Feedback In Respectful Ways

Feedback should be descriptive rather than evaluative. By describing one's own reaction in terms of "I messages", the individual is free to use feedback or not use it as s/he sees fit. By avoiding evaluative language, the need for the individual to react defensively is reduced.

"Whaddya mean you won't take my feed back?"

Feedback should be specific rather than general. To be told that one has to "shape up" is not helpful. It's more helpful to be told that *"Yesterday, when you raised your voice, I missed a lot of what you said because I tend to tune out in the presence of yelling. I respond better when told in a softer voice."*

Feedback should take into account the needs of both the receiver *and* giver.

Feedback should be directed toward behavior which the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some short-coming over which s/he has no control.

Feedback works better when it's solicited, rather than imposed. If it must come unsolicited, it best be put in terms of a partnership, i.e. not *"You* have a problem" but *"We* have a problem".

Feedback is more often heard when it is well-timed. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, the support available from others, etc.)

Feedback is better understood when a "checking-out process" occurs. Everyone involved needs to know that they were heard and understood correctly.

Feedback is far more useful when it is not given as a form of control. There is a difference between being "in control" and being "controlling". Unfortunately, when we are feeling out of control, we have a tendency to be more controlling.