General Facilitator Tips

Sometimes, in our excitement about the opportunity and the material being offered, we can slip into **"teacher/preacher mode."** While there is great value in sharing from our experience, our goal is to spend more time in **"facilitator mode,"**creating space for deep learning as participants journey through the process.

Great facilitators do not fill discussions with their own opinions; they draw out the thoughts, experiences, and insights of participants.

Teaching/Preaching: Teacher-led → outside → in
Facilitating: Participant-led → inside → out

PRAY

1. Timekeeping and Maintaining Focus

People relax and feel safe when they know someone is guiding the process and when expectations are clear.

- **Starting and ending on time** is considerate.
- **Staying on topic** is kind.
- **Coming prepared** is courteous.
- **Establishing group ground rules**, including confidentiality, is a gift.

Clear leadership and healthy boundaries help create a safe and meaningful learning environment.

2. Drawing People Out

Ask **open-ended questions** that encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences, explore new ideas, and engage with the topic.

Open-ended questions:

- Encourage dialogue
- Invite ideas and opinions
- Promote discussion and reflection
- Do not have simple "yes" or "no" answers

These questions help participants engage with the content, connect with one another, and make sense of the topic for themselves.

Open-ended questions often begin with **What, How,** or **Why**.

Examples:

- *“What stood out to you most from the video we just watched, and why?”*
- *“What is one fasting strategy you could try, and how might you implement it in your daily routine?”*

During particularly vulnerable moments, take the lead and model what an honest response can look like. However:

- Avoid putting people on the spot
- Do not ambush participants
- Refrain from leading people toward the “right” answer

Embrace Silence

After asking a question, wait **at least 8 seconds** before speaking again.

Silence can feel uncomfortable while facilitating, but people need time to:

- Think about what they want to say
- Decide whether they want to share
- Process questions or emotions

Keep It Interesting

Vary your approach.

Sometimes:

- Ask a question to the whole group and allow someone to take the lead.

Other times—especially if time is limited:

- Direct a question to two or three people.

If meeting online, another option is to:

- Post the question in the chat
- Invite everyone to respond
- Set a timer for engagement

3. Making Space for Quiet People

Pay attention to body language that may indicate someone wants to contribute, such as:

- Shifting position
- Taking a breath to speak
- Nodding in agreement

Consider using the **“Go Around” technique**:

Ask a question and invite each person to respond in turn.

Good time management matters here. Set expectations beforehand:

"Let's each take two minutes to share our response to the following question…"

Also remember:

If someone rarely speaks unless invited—whether due to personality, culture, or preference—consider gently calling on them and making space for their voice.

4. Develop the Art of Listening

Listening is one of the most important facilitation skills.

Practice Mirroring

Mirroring means repeating back a brief paraphrase of what a participant said, using some of their own words.

- Keep your tone warm and accepting
- Help participants feel heard and understood

Practice Linking

Linking involves taking a participant's comment—whether directly related or not—and connecting it back to the discussion.

This helps:

- Show you were listening
- Keep the conversation on track

One helpful approach is to paraphrase the participant's comment and **ask them to make the connection** to the topic.

If a comment is unrelated, it is okay to **"park it."**

Example:

"Thank you, Sally, for sharing. Let's press pause on that conversation for now and move on to the next question."

Practice Empathy

Notice and acknowledge emotions.

If someone is emotional, crying, or visibly upset:

- Name what you observe with sensitivity
- Acknowledge their experience

- Thank them for sharing

Allow the Holy Spirit to guide how to proceed.

Consider Taking Notes

Practice making brief jot notes while maintaining interest and eye contact.

Having a way to remember what individuals share can help participants feel:

- Seen
- Valued
- Heard

PRAY

Facilitation is not simply leading a discussion—it is creating a space where people can encounter truth, reflect honestly, and grow together.