

Facilitation tips

Use open questions

We'll learn much more about a person if we ask "what is important to you?" instead of "do you like travel?" Asking open questions means we put the person we are asking back in charge. Questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no' tend to be leading – and they don't encourage a person to talk further. Examples of open questions are:

- What are you passionate about?
- What are you good at?
- What would you like your future to look like?

Once a person has started talking it can help to ask elaboration questions. Examples of elaboration questions are:

- Tell me more about [the thing you said earlier]?
- What was it about [the thing you said earlier] that is important?
- What was [the thing you said earlier] like?

An open approach is also important. "Tell me some significant things about your past" is generally more useful than "tell me what jobs you've done in the past."

Keep building up a rich picture

It's important to keep asking for detail so that you can help the focus person to think through what they are saying, and so that those listening can get a full picture. You may find it helpful to think of:

- the 5 W's - Who, What, When, Where, How
- the 3 S's - Sights, Sounds, Smells
- And don't forget the feelings.

Keep it alive

The facilitator needs to be thinking ahead about what they will be asking next so that the conversation stays lively. But be careful that you don't stop listening to the person.

If the conversation seems sluggish then you may be asking the wrong questions or perhaps the person doesn't want to tell you any more. Facilitators have to walk the line between not asking enough

- so the person doesn't tell you anything because you don't sound interested - and asking too much - so they feel you are being pushy, nosy, inconsiderate or rude. Remember silence is okay. Be comfortable with it.

Show respect

It isn't an exercise or procedure when we ask people about their dreams, their identity, or their gifts. We're involved in a deeply personal conversation – one which it's a privilege to be allowed to have with someone. Such a conversation must be approached with an attitude of deep respect for the person. You must demonstrate 'unconditional positive regard'.

Your body language on its own tells the person what you think of them. If you look bored, the person will feel that they aren't interesting. If you look surprised, the person may feel they are being criticised. If you look relaxed, the person may feel you aren't concentrating. If you aren't excited by their dream they may feel their dream isn't exciting.

Simply to encourage someone to talk you will need to show you are listening intently. You will need to show you are interested (just being interested may not be enough). You will need to show you are prepared to accept what they say without judgement.

Do graphic recording carefully

Graphic facilitation is intended to help the person think about what they want to say. It also shows you are interested and listening. If there are other people involved it helps to co-ordinate their thinking. Essentially, the main things to remember are:

Use people's actual words. Don't write what you think they meant.

Record key phrases. This is the simplest, quickest, and most accurate method of capturing what was said.

Make it look good. What the graphic looks like affects the process. Be neat, use colour. Even using just two colours when writing a simple list will make it easier to read. A neat and colourful record of someone's dreams will help them to feel that their dreams are exciting and interesting.

Fill the space available. Don't be afraid to use large letters. Write neatly. If you leave empty space the person will feel they haven't said much of interest.

Keep up. Remember, if everyone regularly stops their conversation to wait for the graphic facilitator then something is wrong.

Show respect. Remember that the person may be talking about very personal issues. Demonstrate your respect as you work.