

# Gauging your effectiveness as a CFG coach and facilitator

Teaching and training and facilitation and collaboration: in NSRF terms, these skills are allied, but definitely distinct from one another. When we lead a CFG Coaches' Training, part of what happens is training attendees in the use of NSRF protocols and activities, but a lot of the week's work is demonstrating good facilitation skills and techniques. All week, we're transparently doing both: aiding new coaches in recognizing the difference and knowing what skills to use, when.

The  [Checklist for Effective Facilitation](#) document below and on the next page was designed as a sample checklist for CFG Coaches (and

others) to assess some key facilitation skills, but it is certainly not a complete list. The linked article within it,  [General Facilitation Tips](#), outlines many more issues that trained CFG Coaches learn to manage.

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## *A Checklist for Effective Facilitation*

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Every productive collaborative process requires someone to take charge, not with the intention of driving or affecting the content, but to facilitate a conversation neutrally toward a positive outcome. Some groups may share facilitation responsibilities, but at any point in time, someone is leading the collaboration.

Think of an orchestra conductor, who sets the tempo of the piece of music, ensures that each member of the ensemble joins and withdraws appropriately, and, through gesture and encouragement, shapes the phrasing and volume to create a wonderful experience for the audience. Facilitators of collaborative conversations do much the same. They set the tempo by creating an appropriate agenda and by imposing just the right structures to produce an appropriate, desired outcome. They ensure that everyone gets to speak, but not all at once and not for too long. They shape the language of the process by making sure all participants speak respectfully, give feedback skillfully, and ask questions from a place of curiosity rather than judgment. A good facilitator must keep all of this in mind doing their job. (Note that this is not a complete list of all attributes of an effective facilitator. For more information, please also see [General Facilitation Tips](#) for more advice on facilitation in general.)

**Purpose** – This checklist allows you to focus on many important attributes of facilitation. To improve your skills as a facilitator, you may choose a few areas to work on. Once growth and confidence has been achieved in those areas, move onto something new. It may also be used for others or yourself to periodically assess your progress with these objectives.

### **An effective facilitator must:**

- \_\_\_ 1. Focus on the group's agenda, not on their own, personal agenda. A great facilitator never sways the outcome by sharing their preferences or perspectives. If you have a strong opinion that you need to express, then someone else needs to facilitate that conversation.
- \_\_\_ 2. Practice compassionate unattachment. Effective facilitators always work for the good of the group, making sure to meet its needs without getting caught up in difficult emotions and group dynamics.

- \_\_\_ 3. Be responsive to group dynamics through the entire process. Pay attention to things like:
  - Who's speaking and for how long
  - Who's not speaking
  - Body language
  - Inflection and tone of voice
  - Reactions from group members
  - Personal agendas (as opposed to the group agenda)
  - Judgmental comments, or feedback that is given unskillfully
- \_\_\_ 4. Intentionally work to include the voices of all the members of the group, offering opportunities and/or different structures to support quieter, thoughtful, or dissenting voices to participate
- \_\_\_ 5. Help everyone uphold all group agreements (or norms), checking in with the group to offer and support the addition of new norms when needed to improve group dynamics.
- \_\_\_ 6. Help a group pinpoint its needs by using paraphrasing, giving guidance, and building consensus.
- \_\_\_ 7. Change the agenda if necessary to meet the group's needs, keeping focused on the purpose and goals of the group, and the work at hand.
- \_\_\_ 8. Know what to do when problems inevitably arise. For example, if the group is floundering, the facilitator might:
  - ask the group where they think they should go
  - give the group a couple of minutes of reflective silence to calm down and center themselves
  - put the issue on the "parking lot" to deal with at a later time once the group has gathered more information and benefited from reflection and distance
- \_\_\_ 9. Transparently admit to mistakes they've made. Mistakes (and acknowledgement of them) are great opportunities for learning—for yourself and the group. Transparently discussing flaws and inelegant choices is also a great way to model the importance of growing from our errors.
- \_\_\_ 10. Resist taking matters personally. Groups or individuals sometimes vent their frustration, anger, and fears on the facilitators. To use that discourse effectively, breathe deeply to calm yourself, then acknowledge these emotions and draw connections to the context, actions, or communication that may have caused them. Recentering the conversation on the problem and not the people can help everyone move forward.
- \_\_\_ 11. Work for balance between process and content, but when you have to choose, put more energy into the process. Calmly staying on-task and within the agreed norms and steps results in safe, bonded communities, which are ultimately more productive.
- \_\_\_ 12. Celebrate when groups transform from a congenial gathering of individuals to a collegial collaborating community with a common purpose and goals! Drawing attention to and celebrating when groups work together effectively to achieve their goals (solving problems, improving work, creating new processes, etc.), emphasizes the importance of collaboration. The attention and celebration will help groups remember how to collaborate and facilitate effectively in the future.
- \_\_\_ 13. Keep a sense of humor! Developing a light, humorous tone (when appropriate) can go far when building relationships and doing great work together.