



# Facilitation Tool Kit

*This toolkit was created by GRuB alumna, former youth counselor, and current staff Mallorie Shellmer.*

In our work with youth and with the broader community, the way that we do something-- the process-- is just as important as what we're doing-- the content. This document covers some of the core facilitation techniques that we use, as well as why we use them. This document is divided into 5 Sections: Strategies for Engagement, Facilitation Techniques, Facilitated Conversations through Conflict, Other Tools, and Resources and References. You are encouraged to modify these tools to fit your program and to explore these resources beyond this short summary document.

## Strategies for Engagement

### Circles

As often as possible, we try to arrange our crew and youth staff in a circle formation. We don't just do it because we think circles are a cool shape. We form ourselves into circles because of the impact that it has on the group as a whole. In a circle, everyone can look around and see each of the other people in the circle. This allows for everyone to be and feel included in the group, and for the focus to be on everyone equally rather than everyone directing their attention on a single leader. Circles can help create a feeling of comradery among the youth as well as staff who are a part of the circle as well.

Circles are a great tool for encouraging everyone's voice to be heard and to encourage a strong connection between everyone in the group. They can be used for check-ins and group discussions, as well as the presentation of material. When delivering material and workshops in a circle, it can make it feel like there isn't just one "teacher" in the group. It opens it up more for there to be dialogue about the content as opposed to youth sitting in rows all facing the person who is presenting the material.

## Check-ins

We do check-ins as a way to bring everyone's voice into the room and also into the space. It is a way to help everyone adjust to the setting and ground themselves in the group and to focus on being present for the rest of the day, while letting other things outside of the space go for the time they will be at GRuB. This time allows staff/facilitators to gauge where the group's energy is at as well.

For the first few weeks of the program, and any time there are new members or guests, each person says their name. Each person has the chance to share how they are doing, as well as state any support needs that they have. Check-ins also include a unique question each day, which may be silly or not, help crew get know each other and bond, or relate to the day's activities. Example questions include: If you were a vegetable, what would it be any why? If you could go anywhere this afternoon, where would it be? What's one quality that you really appreciate in your parent/s or guardian/s? The facilitator might introduce the check-in like this: "Alright. So check-in today is your name, how you're doing, any support that you need, and if there was one law that you could change, what would it be any why?"

## Icebreakers

Play is one of the fastest ways to get folks to rip up their 'cool card' – the attitude of distance and inauthenticity we use to protect ourselves. Play can be challenging for grown-ups and kids. Studies show that people learn better and faster when they are playing and laughing. It's also important that people have choices about how they engage in games and activities.

## Attention Grabbing Tips

At GRuB, we use many tools for getting folks' attention. The specific tools you use might change based on the setting, point in the program, and the group of people. Some of our favorite tools are:

- **“One mic.”** The idea is that there is only one (metaphorical) microphone in the group, and therefore only one person talking. Whoever “has the mic” should be the only person talking. Ways in which we use this tool is by calling out “one mic” to the group or after a while the crew might do this themselves, asking “Can I have the mic?” If you're trying to call attention for someone else in the group, you could give a reminder that “Kim has the mic.”
- **Try agreeing on a clapping pattern or some other noise** to let the group know that someone is trying to speak. Once one person claps or makes the noise, then others in the group can echo that until the group's attention is focused on the person trying to speak.
- **You can also use the classic “If you can hear me...” act.** For example, say to the group “if you can hear me, touch your ear.... If you can hear me, stand on one foot.” Do this until you have the group's attention. You can use the technique of saying it loudly to try to get everyone to hear you immediately, or you can keep your voice soft and wait as a ripple of silence extends from where you are.

## Establish Guidelines

One of the most important things we do as a staff at GRuB and within our youth programs to create a community contract where we spell out our expectations of each other. We then use tools to give each other feedback about our alignment with the contract.

### Examples of Guidelines

- Try on\* - is an invitation to be open-minded to others' ideas, feelings, worldviews and ways of doing things so that greater exploration and understanding are possible. The invitation also includes feeling free to take those things that "fit" and to leave or file away those things that don't fit.
- Both/And thinking\* - invites us to see that more than one reality or perspective can be true at the same time rather than seeing reality as strictly either/or, right or wrong, good or bad, this or that. Using "both/and thinking" can be very helpful in reconciling differences and conflicts that do not present easy solutions.
- Don't yuck my yum - invites participants to hold their immediate negative impressions of any activity or taste to themselves so as not to taint the experience for everyone around them. This is particularly helpful when tasting new foods with children.
- Move up/Move up - If you are someone who doesn't usually engage in discussions, challenge yourself to "move up" and make an effort to share your perspective more than you currently do. If you are someone who usually contributes a lot in conversations, "move up" by practicing your listening skills.

*\*These guidelines are part of VISIONS Eight (8) Guiding Principles for Successful Outcomes Across Cultural Differences. (For more information or for training in the VISIONS, Inc. Model of Multicultural Change, please contact VISIONS Inc., 1452 Dorchester Avenue, 4th Floor, Dorchester, MA 02122, (617) 541-4100, or visit our website at [www.visions-inc.org](http://www.visions-inc.org).)*

## Encouraging Participation

Often times in a group of youth, there will be some folks who are ready to answer every question you ask and want to be the first to share their perspective in group discussions. There are also some students who for a variety of reasons choose not to answer questions and won't push to have their voice heard in group conversations. At the same time, we believe that it is important to bring everyone's voice into the room and have everyone contribute. These are a few tools we use to encourage a balance of everyone's voices:

- **Use a talking piece.** A talking piece is a tool that can be used to establish a physical representation of who has the group's attention and is the person talking. After establishing the use of a talking piece. There are many ways in which you can structure the use of it depending on the goals of the conversation you're having.
  - Someone can start with the talking piece and then pass it around to everyone in the circle/group. This gives everyone a designated opportunity to speak if they would like to or to pass if they don't feel called to speak at that time. This is a particularly useful model with groups who are more reserved or who have a few people who typically dominate the conversation.
  - You can use the talking piece "popcorn style" and have members of the group raise their hand and pass it to one another throughout the conversation. In between people talking, the talking piece can either stay in the middle of the circle where anyone can grab it once they feel like they want to speak, or it can go back to the facilitator and they can pass it to members of the group as people ask to speak.
- **Use beans** (or another small object that can easily be distributed to each person) as a way to regulate the frequency of each individual's contributions. You can give each person two beans and each time they talk, you take a bean from the person who spoke. This is like the physical representation of "moving up and moving

back.” Once someone has used both their beans, they cannot speak again. You can also create a standard that once someone uses their first bean, they cannot use their second bean to speak until everyone else has used their first one.

- **Pairs/Triads/Small Groups**

Large group conversations can be intimidating. It is often helpful to give folks time to do their own thinking first either in silence or in writing. Then you can invite people to share in pairs to warm up their ideas and voices for a larger conversation. Depending on the intended outcome for the session, sometimes reflection in pairs or small groups is all that is needed for active learning.

## Debriefs

Debriefs can be another powerful tool for closing a space. Ask the group to reflect and process what came up by asking guided questions. Try to get the group to reflect on (1) WHAT? - what happened?, (2) SO WHAT? - why it was important or what was the impact?, and (3) NOW WHAT? - what are next steps for the group (or individuals) based on what came up? Are they going to try on new methods of behavior?

## Closings

Closing activities and workshops can be a very important thing to do and can also be easily forgotten. However, it is particularly important to close activities that might involve deep share or deep learning in an intentional way. The group might avoid sharing deep things about themselves again if they do it, and feel like there were a lot of things that were brought up, and then the group disperses without an appropriate closing to the space. Closings also help the group reflect and share any learning that might have happened during the day. These are some facilitation techniques for closing activities:

- **Highlights!** Go around the group and have each person share a highlight of the day or activity. These can be short, one word highlights, or you can do something longer and more open-ended.
- **Creative activity.** You can ask the group to take five minutes to write, draw, or create a poem about what they learned or what might be on their mind now that the workshop is over. This allows each person to capture some of their most prominent thoughts which they can then come back to later on. You can also open up a space for the people (either those who feel most inclined or each individual) to show to the group what they created during that time so as to share their personal learning and take-aways from the activity.
- **Rock, Stick, Leaf** (from Stonewall Youth in Olympia, WA.) In this closing, you go around the group and each person says one thing that “rocked” or that they really liked about the workshop/activity, one thing that is “sticking” with them which is maybe their favorite thing they learned or biggest ah-ha moment, and one thing they are going to “leaf” behind, which could be an assumption that they no longer have, or a myth that they learned isn’t true. If you’re short on time, participants can choose just one of the three to share with the group.

## Keeping the Group Motivated

- **Be prepared!** Have any materials you'll need already put together and all of your activities planned. Make sure everything is set up prior to the workshop or event. Are you mentally prepared and well rested? Modeling the mindfulness and energy you're hoping from others is an important component of facilitation.
- **Be clear on your goals**, what the goals of the workshop or work party are, and also why you are doing it. Why is it important to cover that information or why does that work need to be done?
- **Make sure you're enthusiastic.** If you want others to enjoy doing the work or to be interested in this topic, you'll want to be demonstrating that you're excited about it too.
- **Change lead speakers.** A change in lead speaker sharpens people's listening, and ending with instruction leaves people mentally prepared to do the job.

## Facilitation Theory

### The Life-Cycle of a Group

This view of group development sees a group's journey as similar to that of a human being with various life stages that parallel birth, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, and elderhood/death. These stages of group development were first presented by Bruce Tuckman and Mary-Anne Jensen. For more information see *Journey toward the Caring Classroom* by Laurie S. Frank.

**Forming:** This phase is the beginning of a new class, crew or group. The "honeymoon" phase. Risk-taking is low because people are trying to figure out the norms and generally feeling some amount of anxiety about whether or not they will be accepted. Teacher or mentor role at this phase is to create a safe and inclusive space where there are opportunities for people to get to know one another. It is also the time to establish and clarify rule, expectations and guidelines.

**Storming:** In this phase, a base level of trust has been established between group members. With trust comes a feeling that it is OK to take risks. As people take risks conflict can and will arise. It is the phase where group members are beginning to look for more responsibility. It is also the time when groups can fall apart without conscious leaderships and guidance. Teacher or mentor role at this phase is to create ways to hand off some responsibility, and create opportunities for conflict to be addressed. This can be a scary phase. Allowing a group to be here and creating space for conflict resolution is essential to the group moving forward into the next phase.

**Norming:** Having made it through the "storming" phase, the group now has a deeper level of trust. As the group continues to work together, norms will surface. Group members will easily be able to see and identify some norms, while others will be less obvious. As norms become established and agreed upon, the group moves closer to the performing phase. Teacher or mentor role at this time is to be a process observer, ask clarifying questions and help bring unspoken norms to light for the group. This is particularly important when any unspoken norms are detrimental to the health and safety of group members. The goal is for the group to create norms that maintain a safe space and enhance their ability to work together.

**Performing:** Having successfully worked through the other phases, a group arrives at this phase ready and able to work together collaboratively. There is a deep level of trust and honesty in the group and less superficiality. Members feel respected and seen for their unique skills and gifts. Teacher or mentor role at this time is to offer guidance and outside resources as needed to support the direction and vision of the group.

**Transforming:** Upon reaching this phase, a group may continue again through the other phases with more wisdom and experience and as a result deeper learning and growth. This is also the time when a group's time together comes to an end. Teacher or mentor role at this time is to create space for the group to mark the end of one part of their lives and the transition into something new or unknown. Reflecting on time spent, sharing memories offering appreciation and saying goodbye can all be important parts of the transforming phase.

## **The 4 R's**

When looking to create the most engaging and authentic learning environments, GRuB works to balance the 4 R's (McLaughlin et al in Urban Sanctuaries (1994)): Relevance, Relationships, Responsibility, and Rigor.

**Responsibility:** The program offers opportunities for people to take on real-world responsibilities that are impacted by their decisions and efforts. Individuals have leadership roles within their daily activities, and are both supported and held accountable in their leadership. Reflection and learning from success and mistakes is an integral, and integrated, part of their experience.

**Rigor:** The success of the program requires rigorous work that stretches peoples' capacity for dedication and sustained effort. There are multiple roles that individuals can participate in that require different types of leadership and learning approaches and engage different learning styles and multiple intelligences. Reflection and celebration are built-in components of the program as well as the outcome of their work.

**Relevance:** Program activities and curricula provide an expanding context for participants such that they understand the bigger picture that their work impacts. As people gain experience in the program, there are built-in opportunities for them to shape and evolve the program to be most relevant to their lives and to local community issues.

**Relationships:** Building strong, trusting relationships between all participants is a core program goal. Diverse opportunities for relationship building are integrated into all program activities between the participants, their peers, their mentors, and their community. Activities are structured to create time for connection and reflection.

# Facilitation Technologies

## World Café ([worldcafe.com](http://worldcafe.com))

This tool is a format for conversations for large and small groups. It can be particularly helpful at bringing to light the collective wisdom of groups of very diverse people. It is important to allow time for both conversations within each “round” of questions, and to also have a whole group harvest at the end.

### General Flow

- Seat 4-5 people at café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
- Set up progressive rounds of conversation, usually 20-30 minutes each. Encourage participants to ask open-ended questions that further explore the issue rather than jumping into problem solving or next steps.
- Ask one person to stay at the table as a “host” and invite the other table members to move to other tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights.
- Ask the table host to share key insights, questions, and ideas briefly to new table members, and then let folks explore the currently round of question(s).
- After you’ve moved through the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group share-back from the conversations.

### Facilitator Guidelines

- Create hospitable/safe space that feels welcoming to all
- Explore questions that matter. Pose questions that will be relevant and meaningful to the group
- Encourage each person’s contribution
- Connect diverse people and ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions. This can help guide next steps for the group or other workshops that you could do with them.
- Make collective knowledge visible. Make sure everyone gets to use the information created and harvested from the group!

### Guidelines for Participants

- Focus on what matters
- Listen to understand
- Contribute your thinking
- Speak your mind and heart
- Link and connect ideas
- Listen together for themes, insights, and deeper questions
- Feel free to doodle, draw, play and have fun while discussing.

## Council (from *The Ojai Foundation*, [www.ojaifoundation.org](http://www.ojaifoundation.org))

This is a tool for allowing the group to have a discussion and once the guidelines for council have been laid out, they are guiding the conversation themselves. Having some sort of talking piece is encouraged for this activity.

### Guidelines

- **Speak from the heart.** Share what is true for you in the moment. Speak from your own experience. Listen and feel for what your heart wants to express.
- **Listen from the heart.** As others hold the talking piece, practice active listening. Invite the little voice in your head to take a break so you can be fully present with what is being shared. Notice emotions and physical feelings that arise as others speak from their hearts.
- **Spontaneity.** The practice of not rehearsing. Easier said than done! When the talking piece arrives in your hands, take a moment to ask “what do I need to share, or express in this moment?” You may be surprised by the answer. Trust what comes. Silence, singing, laughing, dancing, speaking; the options are unlimited.
- **Leanness of expression.** Try to say what you need to say without dressing it up or wandering here and there (unless, of course, that is what is needed). Get to the point. This is also about noticing time and group size and leaving time/space for others to share as well.
- **Confidentiality.** What is spoken or done in council stays in council. Even when the council-holders are debriefing or two council members want to discuss council later (unless one of the pair is asking to discuss something particular to the other person’s story or experience). Council has a clear beginning, middle and end. If the stories and events of council are discussed outside of this container it weakens the integrity of the council.
- **The person with the talking piece is the only one who speaks** unless they ask a direct question of someone else or the group.

# Facilitated Conversations through Conflict

*(Modified from the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County)*

Conflict will come up between people and being ready to deal with rifts in the group is key to ensuring a positive and safe environment for everyone. If there is a conflict between members of the group that they feel they cannot resolve on their own, it can be helpful to be there to address it and guide the people involved through a conversation towards some sort of solution.

As a facilitator of a conflict conversation, you are focused on the PROCESS, not the content. You create a safe space and hold both parties to the ground rules that you all agree to. You guide everyone in an orderly process of sharing experiences and identifying needs and feelings. You do NOT solve their problem or act as any kind of judge. This is a process that they can use to resolve conflicts themselves. Below are steps for facilitating such a conversation.

## 1. Facilitator Preparation

The process of facilitating a conversation about conflict is best with two facilitators. Make sure you meet before the conversation to prepare and agree on an approach including language examples, an outline of the conversation process, and a list of useful tools you can use. Decide how you want to work together. It is often useful to have one person as the primary process facilitator with the other person focusing on what is said, what good questions to ask, helping to seek out the deeper issues and interests. Spend time talking about what you already know about the conversation participants. What are their roles?

## 2. Creating a Safe Space – Transparent Process & the Ground Rules

A key part of facilitating successful conversation is to create a safe space and a clear pathway. Welcome the participants and thank them for coming together to talk. Explain that conflict can be scary, but as they get more practice, they can be great opportunities to strengthen our relationships and learn from each other. Tell them about what the process will look like (Transparent process, below) and be clear about what you need each person to agree to in order for the discussion process to be possible (Communication rules, below). Do not move forward until all parties have agreed to those conditions. If they can't agree, you can ask them about the consequences of letting this conflict linger.

### Transparent process

- I'll ask for uninterrupted input from each of you
- I may ask questions to help you share your story
- We will go 1 at a time, ask the others to be active listeners (also possible to reflect back)

### Communication Rules

- Speak with compassion and respect/listen (we're not here to blame)
- No interrupting or name calling
- Honesty
- Work to solve the problem
- Speak from your experience (I statements)
- Maintain confidentiality

### 3. The Snapshot

Explain that each party will have a few minutes to give their side of the story. While each is telling their story, the other listens. If they hear something they want to respond to, they should write it down. Begin simply - What's going on? Other questions that you can use include:

- What is your greatest concern?
- What do you most want to see happen?
- What do you most want the other person to understand?

Give people a chance to react. Take notes as each person explains their side of the story, then reflect back what you heard them say, including content and feelings – helping them hone in on their issues/interests. When you have finished reflecting, ask if there is anything else they wish to add. Use Active Listening (see Active Listening section below) to manage the emotional climate.

### 4. Create a Plan

Create a plan that allows both participants to move forward. You can encourage this by asking questions. Some starting points include:

- If you could do it all over again, is there anything you'd do differently?
- What are some possible solutions to this conflict?
- What are you willing to do right now?
- What's your next step? When will you do this by? What kind of support could you use?

### 5. Closure

Thank everyone for their honesty and hard work. Acknowledge that dealing with conflict can be challenging and scary, and that the work they did today is a big deal. Let them know they can try the same steps in their other conflicts and may find these as opportunities to create deeper relationships.

# Empowering Communication

## Active Listening

One of the core practices that staff members use with and teach youth is Active Listening. It is a communication tool that can be used in any conversation, and is particularly helpful to use when dealing with conflict. When staff check-in with youth to help with problem-solving this tool is used heavily. It can also be helpful to model it when facilitating activities to encourage participation (because youth feel heard when they give an answer or speak). Active listening includes the following practices:

- **Attending.** Use non-verbal cues (Body Language) to show someone you are listening to them.
- **Pacing.** Match the energy of the speaker (happy or sad etc.) showing that you're concerned and really care.
- **Reflecting.** Stating back to the person what you heard; "I'm hearing you say\_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?"
- **Acknowledging.** Validate what the speaker said, not agreeing but letting them know you hear what is important to them; "It sounds like you need people to be honest with you."
- **Reframing.** Similar to reflecting however you can use it when whatever is being stated is harmful or attacking, "It sounds like you are angry with Karina, have you talked to her about this?"

Using these tools while you're facilitating is helpful in steering the conversation towards the end goal. They can be used to help balance the process and content. Another time this is critical is when you are mentoring youth and they come to you for help with a problem they might be dealing with. Using these tools, you can help guide them through a process of finding a solution themselves. Reframing can be particularly useful if the youth is feeling helpless or particularly resentful about the situation. Reframing what they are saying or what is going on in the situation can help them see it from a more positive perspective and move into a more productive and effective space.

## Active Listening is Not:

- *Giving Advice*
- *Agreeing*
- *Fixing the Problem*
- *Telling Your Story or Preparing Your Story*
- *Asking "Why?"*

GRuB has adopted and adapted these tools from the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County

# Resources & References

While GRuB has a lot of great tools to offer on working with people, we have also have greatly benefitted from the work and wisdom of countless individuals and organizations. Here are some places that folks could further their learning and glean more tools.

**The Food Project:** A non-profit organization based out of Boston, Massachusetts after which GRuB is modeled. One of their resources that we use most is Growing Together, which is their program guide. It has resources for activities, facilitation styles, and program structure. To learn more about The Food Project or to purchase Growing Together, go to: [www.thefoodproject.org](http://www.thefoodproject.org)

**Power of Hope:** A non-profit organization that offers programs for youth and adults that will develop leadership skills. They also offer workshops and trainings for adults who want to explore ways to use creativity when working with youth. To learn more about them and find out when they might be offering trainings, go to: [www.powerofhope.org](http://www.powerofhope.org)

**Council:** This tool exists in many different versions so it can be worth exploring which version is the best fit for your program. We most often use the model that The Ojai Foundation teaches and is also explored in the book The Way of Council, by Jack Zimmerman and Virginia Coyle. To learn more about the work of councils, visit [www.ojaifoundation.org](http://www.ojaifoundation.org). To learn more about this specific model of council, you can visit [www.centerforcouncil.org](http://www.centerforcouncil.org), which is a council training organization that split from The Ojai Foundation.

**AORTA: Anti-Oppression Resource & Training Alliance** ([aortacollective.org](http://aortacollective.org)) – AORTA is a worker-owned cooperative devoted to strengthening movements for social justice and a solidarity economy. They are a great resource for trainings on anti-oppression.

**Art of Hosting** ([artofhosting.org](http://artofhosting.org)): Trainings on the art of “harvesting conversations that matter”.

**Liberating Structure** ([liberatingstructures.org](http://liberatingstructures.org)): Treasure trove of cool facilitation technologies.

**Six Thinking Hats** by Edward De Bono describes a process for groups to evaluate and improve on a proposal. We use this tool for decision-making and brainstorming. It works well with both large and small groups.

***Silver Bullets: A Guide to Initiative Problems, Adventure Games and Trust Activities*** by Karl Rohnke. This has a lot of great teambuilding activities and light warm-up games as well.

***Journey toward the Caring Classroom*** by Laurie S. Frank. This excellent book outlines the theories of teambuilding and the behind-the-scenes structures, as well as facilitation tips and specific activities.

**4H Youth Development Program**, a part of WSU Extension- Offers training and resources for facilitating teambuilding activities. Learn more about this program at [www.4h.wsu.edu](http://www.4h.wsu.edu)

**Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County:** They offer trainings on how to facilitate mediations to resolve conflicts and offer support for dealing with conflicts effectively. To learn more about attending a training with them or to find out what services they offer, go to their website at [www.mediatethurston.org](http://www.mediatethurston.org). The Dispute Resolution Center equivalent in your area may be a great local resource.