



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers: let's kick-start this gathering! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is a wild, wonderful format we have where everyone engages on a topic about creative facilitation.

Today, we will be exploring the concept of a FACILITATOR'S PRESENCE.

I am super excited to have a rich discussion with you all. Tell us all you know smile emoticon

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!), Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" if you agree), discussion questions (answer in any order) and case studies that we will use to talk about different ways. I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a PDF transcript posted in a few days. Have fun!

GOALS & AGREEMENTS FOR 16th April 2015

1. To explore and understand the concept/experience of presence of facilitator.
2. To derive factors/behaviours which constitute the presence of a facilitator.
3. To learn and share about practices which can help us build our presence.
4. To unpack case studies and explore ways of applying the learning we gain together.
5. To have fun, connect and rejoice new ways of learning.

In order to achieve the goals, here are some suggestions for agreements to make our time together flow really well. We are still experimenting with this form, so be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS.

AGREEMENTS

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, energetic vibe.
- 2) Share at your level. Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully disagree with each other.
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments and connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often. LIKING IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER SINCE FACEBOOK HAS CHANGED AND WE CAN NO LONGER SEE HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE READ A POST.
- 4) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.



Partners for Youth Empowerment

PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

5) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!). Feel free to add to the discussion even after our 90-minute session is over.

CHECK IN:

If the energy you have right now was an animal or bird, which one would it be? Describe it in a sentence.

Amber Hescoc Johnson: A stellar's jay, because this bird is vibrant, fearless and teams up with other birds to reach its goals.

Padmaja Nagarur: I feel like Master Shifu (a red panda) looking for inner peace as my head swims with many thoughts.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Wow! Such powerful imagery! Love it! Mine would be the woodpecker. Sitting still, but digging!

Shilpa Setty: I feel like a swan floating on surface of water getting a good view of the lake, looking at everything around me and grasping everything that I can

Virtually Ally: A hummingbird. Flying fast from flower to flower to gather nectar (aka the wisdom from everyone here :))

Chatelle Jeram: A cat, stretching into new ideas, ready to explore...

Nilisha Mohapatra: Welcome, Shilpa, Virtually Ally, Chatelle, Padmaja and Amber. I am thoroughly enjoyed the vividness of your check-ins, and certainly basking in all your energies!

Nadia Chaney: I feel like a bright red-feathered downy woodpecker, pecking for yummy treasure.

Nadia Chaney: Nil! We're both woodpeckers!

Nilisha Mohapatra: Nadia YES! I was just typing the same! This is fun.

Nilisha Mohapatra: As I notice everyone's energies, I see themes of seeking. So amazing.

Kitty Jackson: Hey everyone, mine would be a bird, flitting from one thing to another and enjoying the lightness of being.

Nick Kearney: Sorry to miss it yesterday, my image would have been that of a long-legged fly upon the water...

Nilisha Mohapatra: Nick Kearney, so glad you checked in today!

QUESTION 1:



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

How do you understand the concept of presence of a facilitator? Is it dynamic or static? Can we control or choose how our presence is? Tell us all you know.

Padmaja Nagarur: Control is an illusion. The present moment is the only reality. What's under our control is acceptance.

Amber Hescoc Johnson: My knowledge is limited to my discussions with Charlie Murphy as I begin my new role at PYE. He gives me the impression that it's dynamic in that you have to be open, responsive, listening and going with the flow. We can choose to see the strengths in others even when we feel triggered.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Ah! Padmaja, tell us a little more about the acceptance. I'm intrigued by the depth in your response. Amber, YES! I agree with you on the choice part. Everytime I think of presence, the visual that comes to my mind is of a steady and calm flow of water that engulfs.

Virtually Ally: I'm also thinking about Charlie -- his presence -- through verbal/non-verbal expression -- exudes ease, warmth, compassion, energy, self-awareness, confidence and caring. "Comfortably shifting" to meet the needs of the group.

Mayan Patel: I'm present with myself, what i feel in my body is a reflection of what is happening as a whole. I'm also present with the group, where they are now and curious to what they need.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Mayan Patel, so presence is almost like a mirror then? For ourselves and the group?

Padmaja Nagarur: To be able to hear that heart beat within you in the midst of palpable silence in the room and still be accepting of yourself while holding space for everyone.

Kitty Jackson: I think it's dynamic, changing and adapting with the energy of the group

Chatelle Jeram: I understand a facilitator to be a guide who assists and inspires others to share their truth. I agree with previous statements that it's a dynamic role, because we don't know what will happen next and how the energy of the situation will change. I think there is always a choice in how we are present.

Nadia Chaney: A new thought I'm working with lately is to connect my presence to my sense of humour. Not in terms of funniness; more of flexibility, surprise, spontaneity, improvisation. Even when the group is going very deep or when there is resistance or conflict I maintain my sense of humour and that allows me to stay loose, responsive and therefore present.

Shilpa Setty: I feel it is a dynamic one, until we master the art of mindfulness. Until then, I feel I am relating everything to how I feel, what I know, and believe; and what is happening with the group and the individuals. To be fully present with them needs practice

Mayan Patel: Nilisha Mohapatra yes i believe a mirror is a great analogy. What I bring, what they bring. All is reflected in the connection. And that's where we operate from. I really place a lot of



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

importance on my self-awareness and presence so i am open to spontaneity but also can't get lost if i have timings/safety to maintain.

Nilisha Mohapatra: I'm hearing a common theme of choice in presence. Could we have some examples on how we make that choice?

Nilisha Mohapatra: Mayan, thanks for that! I love the connection bit there.

Nadia Chaney: I think self-awareness comes from the work we do when we aren't facilitating. It's knowing the centre of self, facing our triggers, doing adequate self-care, exploring our own creativity. The more we meet our own needs the more we understand and approach mastery of ourselves as a sacred instrument. The moment of choice is in the preparation to play. Choosing the practice.

Nilisha Mohapatra: I echo that thought! A lot of responses here are talking about the aliveness of our 'self'. I find myself asking often, 'Who am I, right here and right now.' to understand my presence in the given context.

Padmaja Nagarur: Sorry I had to drop out last night. I quite relate to what Nadia has to say about the need to understand our own selves not just while facilitating. I've consciously started observing my impulses, allowing a pause of a few seconds and playing on that impulse (instead of resisting it). It doesn't come easy but I'm still at it.

Arindita Gogoi: Wow! What an insightful subject it was yesterday! Sorry Nilisha Mohapatra, I just couldn't get access to internet while the assembly was on. But to give my two penny of thought on the subject; I feel that learning is a continuous process as it will happen with every passing second with the events that are happening with and around us. However, most of these learning is incidental and the presence of a facilitator on certain occasions can prepare the learners emotionally and mentally to open up to the idea of learning. One simple question thrown by a facilitator, more often than not, gives learning a huge impetus. The retention and application of learning may have a greater significance with the presence of a facilitator. However, we, as facilitators have to be very careful about not coming on the way of learning and just facilitate. Dr. Michael Gass, during a workshop told us, " The biggest facilitation to learning sometimes for us, is to stay out of the way." Wow!

QUESTION 2:

Recall a time when you were with a facilitator, who engaged you in a session effortlessly, and you were completely in awe. What signs/qualities did you notice, that indicated a strong presence? How did this facilitator's presence impact group?

Amber Hescok Johnson: I'm thinking of an amazing teacher who was very open about his own mistakes in his career in politics.... he is a very emotionally intelligent person and created a classroom where everyone was so engaged in learning, and never bored.



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

Nadia Chaney Ruth Zaporah last month in Berkeley California, at her Action Theater workshop. She is an incredibly nuanced performer. Her every muscle is aware and under her control. You can't take your eyes off her. Yet, the effect is funny, relaxed and bright. The group feels like it's easy to do what would otherwise feel impossible. Easily one of the most talented group leaders I've encountered.

Kitty Jackson: I admire an ability to stay present a focused and never anxious or stressed, no matter what is going on in the background

Nilisha Mohapatra: Ah transparency, awareness, and something about really owning or holding the space/self/group. I am reminded of my first training with Nadia Chaney- loving yet piercing eye-contact, so much openness, tuned into everyone's body language.

Nadia Chaney Thanks Nilisha

Virtually Ally: Possibility mindset! A swirl of creativity and play! Learning while laughing!

Nilisha Mohapatra: Virtually Ally- Learning while laughing! So simple yet so impactful.

Virtually Ally Thanks Nilisha. He he he. Ha ha ha. HO HO HO!

Nilisha Mohapatra: What's alive for me with your sharing is a practice I am beginning to lean into- of using loving-kindness meditation when working with a group which is resistant or building their support. So sending out vibes of acceptance and love. I am still curious of the impact.

Chatelle Jeram: When someone comes across as truthful and genuine, I find that I am fully engaged in what they are saying.

Shilpa Setty: Reminds me of Nadia Chaney when I was working on my introduction with the group. The look in her eyes, genuine offer to try it again, felt so non-judgemental, trust, belief, etc. that made me try my intro at least 3 times in front of the group. I just can feel it when I think about it.

Chatelle Jeram: Nilisha, I have also been using this practise of sending out loving vibes. It is difficult to 'measure' the impact, however in personal experiences I have seen situations of rising conflict deflate and calm down on more than one occassion with people ...See More

Nadia Chaney: Shilpa Setty, that's an unforgettable moment for me, too! It was as if the was another level of presence saying to me "she wants to push herself further now." I just listened and you had that amazing insight into your own story and your path as a facilitator.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Chatelle Jeram, That's amazing! I have to try it more to know what it's really about.

Shilpa Setty: Nadia Chaney you are so good with your intuitions. I'm learning to listen to them.

Padmaja Nagarur: The most recent I remember is our training with Peggy. She was extremely effortless and I found myself articulating thoughts that I was surprised I shared with the entire group without feeling uneasy. What struck me about her was unconditional compassion in her eyes, her unerasable smile and allowing room for silence.



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

Arindita Gogoi: It has to be Laurie Frank hands down! I was in awe of her sensibility towards all participants, openness to listening, understanding of her subject, and most importantly, the humility with which she conducts all of that! It was a workshop on 'Invitational Education'. It was almost like a star struck moment for me...I was like...I want to be like her, when I become a better facilitator!

QUESTION 3:

What factors hinder a facilitator's presence?

Nadia Chaney: Taking things personally. Distraction. Trying to get your own needs met by the group. Worrying about what they think of you. Trying to be perfect. Being too stuck on the plan. Anything that makes you try to control the process instead of being flexible and committed.

Nilisha Mohapatra: That's a great list there. Something that hinders my presence is what is happening to me outside of the facilitation session. Not to be able to leave it out and just focus. And sometimes getting caught in too many logistical challenges.

Kitty Jackson: Not listening! Feeling unheard makes me shut down immediately

Nilisha Mohapatra: Kitty, the listening is for yourself and for the group?

Shilpa Setty: Something that hinders my presence is "What if I don't know what to say or what to ask" sometimes self-doubt

Nilisha Mohapatra: Ah! When the inner critic raises its head.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Shilpa, how to manage that doubt?

Shilpa Setty: Currently, I am working on believing in myself, and working on understanding how to be like the light house that you had mentioned. Firstly, by understanding where the critic is coming from and working with it to develop my skills, and not get affected by it.

Nilisha Mohapatra: That info is gold!

Padmaja Nagarur: Nadia! That looks like an exhaustive check-list.

Arindita Gogoi: I think the biggest hindrance is over confidence (thinking you already know what will be said by a participant, and hence stalling or hindering expressions), followed by impatience, too much control, thinking that there is a perfect formula to get maximum output, rigidity in ideas, being judgmental, having biases, and finally publicly discarding an idea or thought as incorrect or wrong (even though the idea may not match with the ethics and ideologies of the group or facilitator). And in the words of Dr. Michael Gass, "The biggest hindrance is opening a wound you cannot stitch." referring to being mindful of time, space and content management during facilitation.

QUESTION 4:

What practices can help you build, deepen or strengthen a presence that you desire, and fully express it?



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

Kitty Jackson: Doing a lot of work on yourself. Being completely authentic and bringing your whole self

Nadia Chaney: Lately I'm learning about boundaries when I'm facilitating. How to stay aware own energetic output so I don't get drained. Working on keeping my centre more and noticing the difference between presence and "merging" with the group.

Nilisha Mohapatra: I love the work on self! Kitty, and ideas on how to do that?

Of late I am strengthening my self-management practice, while facilitating. How not to get caught up with a story, emotion, or incident. Asking myself who is this person/group becoming, or what is waiting to come alive, helps me stay focused. Even just wondering what is it like to be in this group or be this client.

Other practices are looking for needs, mine or the groups, under behaviors. And breathing!

Shilpa Setty: I second that Kitty Jackson self-work is a must. I feel sometimes it's what you believe of yourself is what you believe of the group.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Ah, Nadia, so presence of a facilitator then is playing a dual role. It is separate from the group, while being a part of it. Remind me of a lighthouse!

Nilisha Mohapatra: I would add exploring creative practices here. Art, poetry, journaling, collage.. ANYTHING!

And even doing some shadow work on self- inner critic, internal voices.

Shilpa Setty: True Nilisha Mohapatra that helps build our creative confidence and help us in articulating precisely and effectively

Virtually Ally: Thank you #Nilisha Mohapatra It was so helpful to read your words, "Asking myself who is this person/group becoming, or what is waiting to come alive, helps me stay focused."

Nilisha Mohapatra: Virtually Ally I glad! This has been a tool for me to really hold myself. It does wonders. I'd love to know how it works for you, when you use it.

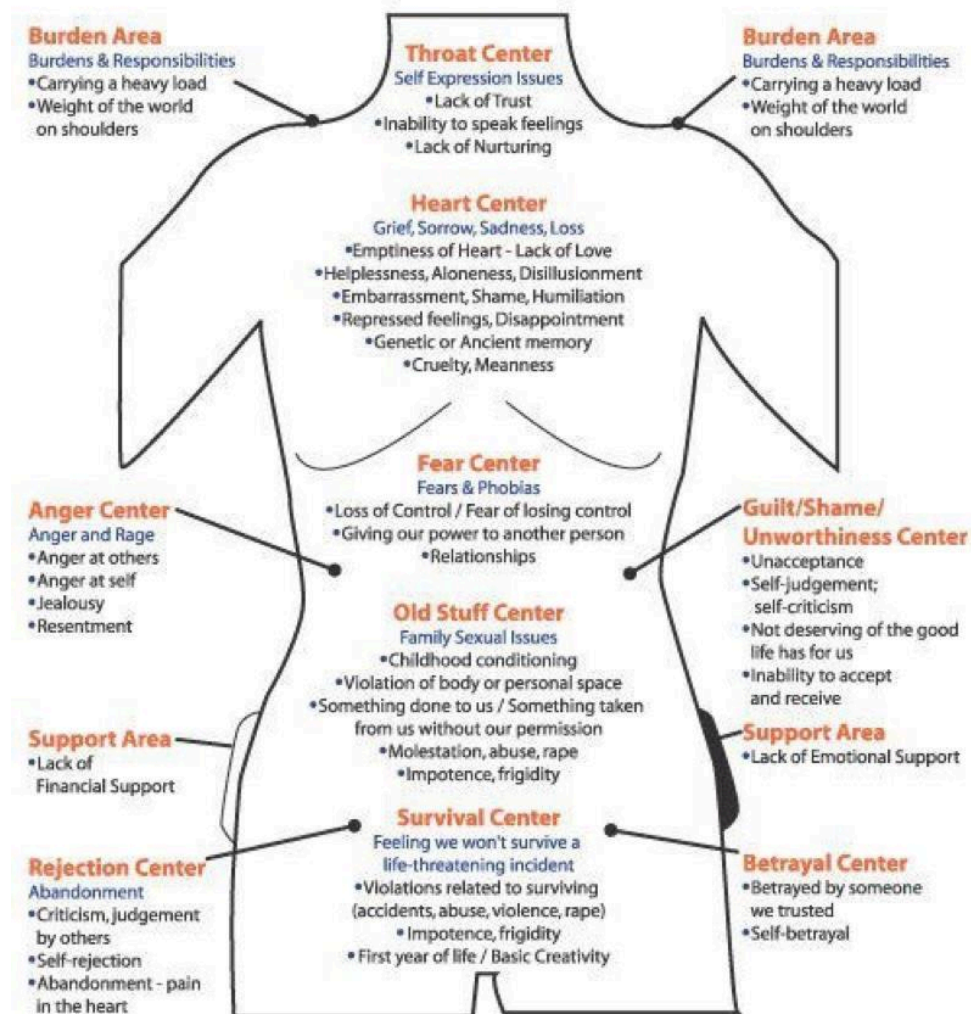
Virtually Ally: I'm new to the world of creative facilitation. Practices that are helping me are 1) asking for help 2) watching myself on video when possible - honest self-critique 3) 1:1 debrief conversations with participants - asking them to reflect.

Nilisha Mohapatra: So much goodness in your response! And I'm with you on the celebration of self. I am slowly learning that the practice creates more possibilities. Learning to lean in.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Earlier we were talking about work on self and understanding our own need. I have found that the body holds a lot of wisdom for us to explore. I found this image a couple of days back, which is really helpful in understanding how/where we experience emotions and triggers in our body.

PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

Emotional Energy Centers of the Body



Virtually Ally: What a thoughtful resource! #Nilisha Mohapatra I look forward to reviewing it. Thank you for your kind support.

Padmaja Nagarur: Nils! That image is one helluva resource. One thing that I've picked up from Rick when he was here was a technique of Focusing. And I've learnt to express my inner state using colours. And boy...I love it! I get to choose my colour and let my emotions lead my drawing.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Padmaja Nagarur, thanks for coming back and responding to the Qs! I love colour guidance work. I too use it with my coaching clients when emotions are intense and or unclear. This resource above is my go to for body awareness coaching. It's pretty spot on!

CASE STUDY 1:



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

You are working with a group of teenagers, to build life skills. It is a high energy group, full of ideas, chatter and laughter. You wish to have session with them, which requires them to be calmer and tighter. How can you employ your presence in this scenario to achieve the goal?

Chatelle Jeram: I would introduce an activity that starts out matching the exuberant energy level of the group, but then leads to a calmer atmosphere. An activity with sound strikes me as good for this. For example, singing a song together that leads to a quiet finish.

Shilpa Setty: Acknowledge them of their ideas and freshness, and introduce them to the session that we will be having, and do a warm up related to the session

Nilisha Mohapatra: Ooh so really meeting them where they are at, and guiding that energy with yours! Love it.

Arindita Gogoi: We usually use fun energetic call outs that require everybody to speak and repeat the call outs in unison, instead of saying "can i have your attention, or keep quiet". That kind of brings in the initial cohesion. Then we introduce an activity like Chatelle Jeram mentioned that starts off energetically but concludes into a calmer atmosphere.

CASE STUDY 2:

You are working with a co-facilitator, whose style is different from yours. S/he has a big, joyful personality, and enjoys engaging the body in learning. They have a knack for energizing the group easily. Your personality is calm, soft yet assertive/solid. You have a comforting effect on the group, and enjoy reflective processes. How can you ensure a balance between each other's presence/styles?

Virtually Ally: Wow, I just attended a training and this was the exact scenario. Answering from a participant's perspective -- the "bigger personality" dominated the space - by the end it felt like the calm facilitator was her assistant not co-facilitator. After the training I wondered, "What if the facilitators had chatted about this in advance? AND...What would have happened if the facilitators simply had addressed their difference in presence/styles in their introduction to the audience? Would that have shifted audience participation and energy?" I'm curious, has anyone ever done that? i.e. Actually pointed out their different facilitation styles to the audience?

Mery Miguez: Wow, this is very interesting because I resonate very much with the energetic facilitator myself, although sometimes I work with people who are even more energetic than me, in which case I become the calming facilitator. I think in my case is a matter of feeling the temperature of the group and the environment and see what is needed, then I try to bring that into presence.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Virtually Ally and Mery Miguez, thank you for sharing your personal experiences. It's so helpful! This is a situation I have encountered too, and sometimes just have an honest conversation with my co-facilitator, to figure out the balance. Sometimes we just pick sessions which are very different from our usual styles, and go with a creative risk!



PYE Third Thursday Assembly April, 2015

Arindita Gogoi: This is a very common scenario I have faced myself...I am more of the energetic kind while I have had colleagues who have a totally calming facilitation style. We have managed to discuss and plan our workshops in a manner that we alternatively shift between topics of discussion. Also, usually, post lunch sessions are given to me in the anticipation that there will some games and engagement tools that will be used. Also, sometimes within the same session, we try to address each other and welcome any further input so that some balance is restored.

Mayan Patel: I like to alternate with a cofacilitator, deciding before who has primary airtime over an activity or time period. Can help if you have a discreet signal between both of you to communicate if someone is taking over. Totally agree honest communication all the way. Pre and post session.

CASE STUDY 3:

You are walking into a group which you are meeting for the first time, and are aware of the diversity that exists, in terms of age, color, work experience, gender etc. You are nervous since it is your first time working with an inter-generational and inter-racial group. What do you want the group to note about your presence as a facilitator? Is there anything specific you would like to do to establish your presence and engage this group?

Padmaja Nagarur I think I'd like to somehow address the child in us all that knows no differences. Humour and energy has always come to my rescue every time I want to create a level playing field.

Arindita Gogoi: Another facilitator had done this activity with our diverse group of people once (during a workshop)...we were asked to tell about a fond memory of one of our grandparents or if we haven't had a chance to meet them, then something that we have learnt about them. It was a strong activity connecting us to our roots and acknowledging the diversity of the group...many of our grandparents had migrated from Pakistan and Bangladesh; some from Tibet and Nepal and it was such an enriching experience to hear about their struggles and lives...it was emotional but a very happy activity...everyone had smiles on their faces when talking about fond memories of their favourite grandparent! I don't know if it will work elsewhere...in India, the diversity is so deep and vast that the activity becomes an eye opener...