



# Facilitating with Friends and Family

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Assembly

**Nilisha Mohapatra: GOALS for December 18th 2014:**

- 1) To explore the impact of bringing our facilitation practice into our personal relationships and spaces.
- 2) To share activities and ideas that work in these personal spaces.
- 3) To build an understanding together of how to approach this form of facilitation, and address challenges.
- 4) To connect, learn together and have a meaningful time with this community.

**AGREEMENTS for December 18th 2014:**

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.
- 2) Share at your level; Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable.
- 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.
- 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.

**Nilisha Mohapatra: CHECK-IN question for December 18th 2014:**

**Using any metaphor from nature, share one sentence describing your relationship with arts-based learning.**

**Kitty Jackson:** My relationship with arts-based learning is like a humming bird, dashing from one thing to another and buzzing around close but not quite diving in

**Nilisha:** I love the imagery, Kitty!

My relationship with arts-based learning is like the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. I am mid-way there!

**Kitty:** Love that Nilisha!

**Barb Applepieski:** My relationship with arts based learning is an adolescent owl who has learned to fly and is ready to learn to use their flying skills for hunting and exploring.

**Nilisha:** Welcome, Barb! Great to have to here! I love how your description shows a fine balance between learning and mastery!

**Rekha Kurup:** My relationship with Arts-Based Learning is like a Splurging Gush of a Waterfall that bursts forth when I least expect it and leaves me spellbound at the outcome!

**Nilisha:** Oh wow, Rekha! Welcome. And what a stunning effect your description has!

**Nadia:** My relationship with arts-based learning is a rustling chipmunk getting ready for winter in a tall, old tree

**Nilisha:** Welcome, Nadia. So good to see you here I can visualize the chipmunk!

**Elis Motta:** A young flower, starting to blossom, and not yet knowing how magical it can become...

**Nilisha:** Hello, Elis! That is powerful imagery, embracing the unknown.

**Sarah Bullock:** Mine is like a seed with young roots and just sprouting, full of potential, fire and creative expression yet young and vulnerable in its delivery

**Aisha K. Francis:** A caterpillar becoming a butterfly...knowing that I always had the DNA of a butterfly in me and that my life's journey led me through experience, trial, hard work to not only reveal its beauty in me but then give me wings, to no longer crawl but, to fly and share it with the world.

**Arindita Gogoi:** Sorry for dropping in late... My relationship with art based learning is like that of a landscape; every element is a part of a narrative and every view is a story in itself. And depending on the perspective, everything is a part of a greater microcosm.

**Nilisha Mohapatra: Question 1:**

**How can you ensure a safe and engaging space for your family members and friends, while facilitating arts activities with them?**

**Kitty Jackson:** I think you have to make it comfortable for people - don't push people too far too fast. Start slowly with easy to participate activities

**Nilisha:** I agree with you. Starting small, baby steps. Something that has helped me is sharing my intent of why I want to conduct these activities or even sharing some of my successes of having used arts-based practices. Tons of encouragement and cheer makes the atmosphere fun too!

**Kitty:** How about something inviting, like just putting out some pens and paper and people can start to use them if they wish

**Nilisha:** That is a good idea. Very non-threatening. How about even setting up the space differently? Making it more interactive in some way with music or craft.

**Barb Applepieski:** Nilisha that's a great point, and I think that providing a short series of activities that f&f can interact with independently helps to even out the (potential) power imbalance of YOU telling THEM what to do!

**Nilisha:** That is a great insight about power imbalance, Barb. Would have never thought about that much when surrounded by family and friends!

**Elis Motta:** Continuing what Kitty said about something inviting and what Barb said about us telling them what to do, I would start by not stating that I'm proposing an activity, I wouldn't call it an activity in the first place. We have used fotos to stimulate story telling before in my family and that has been great - all we did was ask people to bring pictures of the family... I think I would also think of specific ways to engage children (maybe first?) and reach adults through them...

**Nilisha:** That sounds fun. So sharing stories and memories through the pictures?

**Elis Motta:** Yes, the pictures become just the starting point for the stories to develop - and at least in my family these stories tend to have a strong element of "fiction" and poetry...

**Nilisha:** Haha that must be creating a lively vibe to invite imagination!

**Arindita Gogoi:** Storytelling is something that is always fun. Sharing personal stories of travels, encounters with people, learnings are relatively non-threatening. If the group looks engrossed, we could gradually delve into a letter writing exercise to self or one of the members of the group.

**Nilisha:** Okay, since it is a little quiet here today, we thought we would share the case studies now. As and when people drop by, everyone can work on them at their own pace. We would love to hear your ideas. So feel free to respond to the case studies whenever you see them.

**Case Study 1:**

**It is your grandfather/grandmother's birthday, and your entire family has gathered to celebrate a milestone birthday. What are some arts-based activities you would like to introduce on this occasion, to bring about sharing and connection?**

**Kitty Jackson:** A group poem would be great! Then you could frame it or put it in a card for your grandfather to keep.

**Nilisha:** Yes! Like a family poem of sorts! I also like the idea of writing appreciation notes, and stringing them up together to put on a wall.

**Elis Motta:** Maybe because Xmas is around the corner, I'm currently struggling to deal with gifts and consumerism in my family, so the first thing that comes to mind is using arts to make a collective or individual gift. I also like the idea of singing together...

**Nilisha:** How would you like to set this up, Elis? It is such an exciting idea.

**Sarah Bullock:** bringing photographs of the family that mean something and creating a collage. Would stimulate sharing of memories and interaction

**Kitty:** Love that! Ooo - that gives me goosebumps.

**Elis:** I think having artsy materials available, asking people to bring an object that is meaningful to them, or suggesting a collective video-making process are some of the ideas that come to mind...

**Nilisha:** Ah, I want to try that. I would love to add some form of one worded notes to the collage. Maybe strengths, or how each one feels.

**Barb Applepieski:** Elis - it would be such a beautiful gift to hand out lyric sheets for a favourite song of your grandparent and/or have a "rhythm section" for those who do not like to sing

Sarah your collage idea is so nice, and could be scanned and reprinted into a keepsake for the family! I can also see using magazines to supplement memories - would allow people to reach into their memory more than just those triggered by photos! (ie people might cut out pictures related to favourite family activities)

**Nilisha:** Ohhh yeah! Maybe even make trading cards for each other with magazine cut outs!

**Aisha K. Francis:** A visual display of precious moments through miming/acting. The family could individually or collectively, with or without words, act out favourite moments/memories. If you use no words, others can chime in by guessing what is being re-enacted. This would not only take everyone on a journey down memory lane but also open up dialogue, incite wholehearted, belly laughter and allow everyone to cherish the memories. The grandfather/mother would feel appreciated, know that all they did was respected/remembered/cherished and be honoured for the legacy they have created.

**Arindita Gogoi:** Our family is very communicative, musical and full of vigour...I can imagine role plays and lots of folk music.

### **Nilisha Mohapatra: Case Study 2:**

**The holidays are around the corner. Imagine you are spending the day with your friends and family but they are very hesitant about playing games or doing organised activities. What activities could you gently and easily introduce to start encouraging them to take creative risks?**

**Kitty Jackson:** A lot of holiday games involve some arts-based activity. Charades is a good example. Starting with something familiar might help and then moving to more challenging theatre or drama games might be fun.

**Nilisha:** Charades can be real fun! Something similar is Pictionary- drawing and guessing.

I had once put up a canvas on a wall, and left non-toxic washable paint near it for my friends to leave their thumb prints or palm prints. It turned out to be really colourful, and people couldn't stop playing on the canvas!

Something that I want to try this year is to invite everyone to leave notes with 'wishes and hopes' for one another.

**Kitty:** That sounds like a lovely idea Nilisha. How would you organize that?

**Nilisha:** Mmm let's see. I would just leave chits of coloured paper and pens in one place, and ask my family to write what they wish for, for one another, in 2015. They just have to write the person's name, and a wish/hope. They can even draw if they feel like. I would like to set it up right from Christmas till New Year's Eve, and they string everything together into a wishing tree or a collage for New Years!

**Barb Applepieski:** I like how easy it would be to take a traditional activity (a christmas tree would be an example from my cultural background) and springboard from that - the wishes could be folded up & added to the tree and opened on christmas morning (or burned ceremonially)!

**Sarah Bullock:** Vision boarding?

**Kitty:** can you explain that Sarah?

**Sarah:** Creating a collage of what people want to bring into their lives for the year ahead - words, photos, images, drawing, perhaps as a family goal - had a client once do one with their family about buying a house - they succeeded within a few months. Dreaming and then putting to paper.

**Nilisha:** WOW! The power of visualization and affirmations.

**Elis Motta:** I really like that Nilisha! It also made me think of decorating the Xmas tree in our living room together, with messages we want to share with one another - which can include words or not. Sort of a wish Xmas tree...

**Nilisha:** Awesome! Creating your own X-mas tree decor Would love to know how that turns out!

**Nadia:** I'd get them doing something that they recognize, like a scavenger hunt

**Arindita Gogoi:** I'd encourage a floor mandala activity where everyone gathers to add a pattern and colour to the design. That doesn't impose any performance pressure. While a few members are busy with the mandala(Buddhist and Hindu design that represents the universe)/rangoli (a floor decoration design popular in various regions of India), the rest can be gradually involved with singing some songs.

**Nilisha Mohapatra: Case Study 3:**

**You are spending a day with 3-4 of your teenage cousins, and want your time together to be meaningful. You intend to work with them on developing their self-awareness. How would you use this time?**


**Elis Motta:** I'm thinking take them to a place that is very different than their everyday life reality. Trying to raise self-awareness through being in contact with the different... And then "facilitating" a debriefing.

**Nilisha:** I know time is up, but I am so so tempted to ask what you mean by being in contact with the different. Elis

**Elis:** It could mean many things, but basically it is the idea of changing your routine for a bit, seeing/experience something totally new, learning about different ways to doing things, and from there realizing things about our own way of being in the world... A very concrete example could be using different means of transportation, something they've never, or almost never used.

**Nilisha:** How interesting! So, it is like knowing who you are or what is happening to you, when you are outside your comfort zone or in a new experience. Thanks for that!

**Arindita Gogoi:** Travelling to a new geography and social space is something I'd consider. I'd love to take them to a location where they might encounter stories that they're unfamiliar with...like a very crowded street where physical labour and day-to-day struggle is very evident.



Nilisha Mohapatra: Beloved people, we have come to the end of the facilitated part of this discussion. This was such a priceless conversation, rich with so many wonderful ideas. I feel grateful to have been here with you. THANK YOU!

Feel free to keep contributing to the case studies even after, and Kitty would share a PDF transcript of the chat in a few days.

I cannot wait to try some of these activities As the last gathering of 2014, this chat was perfect