



PYE Third Thursday Assembly
January 18, 2018

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is an exciting format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a niche aspect of group facilitation.

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!); Goals and Agreements for today's session (hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session); 4 discussion questions and 4 case studies (posted approximately every ten minutes; answer in any order). I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted on the www.pyeglobal.org website, as well as the files of this Facebook page, in a short while. These transcripts are so great we're thinking of making a book out of them!

This month we are discussing PRESENCE

The co-founders of PYE, Charlie and Peggy, tell us that there are basically 3 key skills in facilitation: listening empathically, speaking from the heart and presence. Presence is spoken of in many ways. Some people talk about "leadership presence" which is a kind of dominant charm or fearlessness; then there's "stage presence" which is a magnetic ability to command attention; others talk about it more spiritually as a stable state of mindful awareness and non-judgement; still others talk about presence as a kind of determination and focus.

Today we are going to explore the notion and practice of presence in facilitation. First we will explore our own definitions...what IS facilitative presence? Then, we'll talk about ways to develop presence but also ask what the possible risks and costs might be, both for us and for our participants.

[Andrew Nalani](#) Glad to be part of this convo!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Yay! Andrew! Lovely to have you here!

[Pamela Schuller](#) HI Nadia. These forums are great learning place. Thank you



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Pamela Schuller! Welcome back!

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Check-in Question for Jan 18, 2018: Describe how you're doing today as a mythical creature on an adventure!

[Christabel Shaler](#) Sparkly Walrus

[Nadia Chaney](#) Welcome Christabel!

[Nadia Chaney](#) 😊 love that sparkle, C

[Pamela Schuller](#) Today I am like a dragon who has been hibernating and is lumbering and pushing her way out from the mountainous rubble of destruction of an ancient civilization and now has her head out and is shaking the crumbly dirt of her back and really needs to clear her lungs with a blast of fire and breathe deeply the fresh air.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Me...I think I'm feeling like a being who lives on the sun today...and I'm making the long journey to earth...I feel overwhelmed with amazing things, and a bit scorched. Time to make my way to earth and be absorbed by a plant or tree 😊

[Tim Hall](#) A dragon who has just woken up from a magnificent 100 year sleep 😊

[Pamela Schuller](#) Ha ha-ha!....that's 2 dragons waking up

[Sumanth Raj](#) Today am traveling neighborhood state experiencing new, am feeling high when met with new young people, they have almost achievable dreams



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[Nadia Chaney](#) That sounds exciting!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Are you working with Dream a Dream?

[Sumanth Raj](#) No am independent doing

[Nadia Chaney](#) Cool! Great to have you here.

[Sumanth Raj](#) Thank u

[Andrew Nalani](#) I feel like an eagle on a mountain, looking over a rugged landscape into a horizon i know i must fly towards... the golden light of the evening sunset is saying it's time up, and it's time to begin the trek.

[Samar Shata](#) I feel like a being who lives under earth today. I am digging my way up to the surface of the earth to meet people and be all earthly

[Nadia Chaney](#) Yay! Welcome!

[Samar Shata](#) Nadia Chaney missing your energy in Van 😊😊

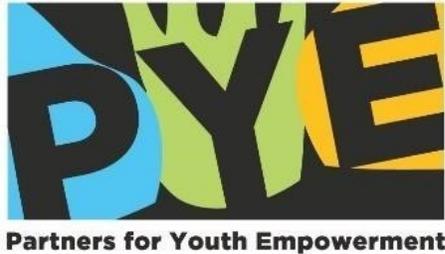
[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you so much. I miss the Van vibes too

[Barb Applepieski](#) I'm a winged mouse-bear combo and I'm driving a magical time-travelling car into the land of play! Wheeee! 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) yeah you are!! Love that!

[Shilpa Setty](#) I feel like a happy Little tiny chick on a journey to the farm excited, happy, overwhelmed for I am sometimes kept away from flock... Can't wait to explore the farm..

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Djanira! Welcome!



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Goals and Agreements for this session on Jan 18 2018

- 1) To be able to discern facilitative presence from other definitions of presence
- 2) To understand the costs and benefits of facilitative presence
- 3) To learn how to develop and deepen our presence
- 4) To increase our options and choices as facilitators
- 5) To support each other's learning and have meaningful fun!

In order to achieve these, here are some suggestions for COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS to make our time together flow really well. Be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe. If the facilitator finds your comments aggressive or inappropriate in any way you will receive a personal message.
- 2) Be willing to entertain simultaneous truths. Rather than proving a point, try to listen to understand, and be willing to agree to disagree. At the same time, if you have a strong belief be willing to stand up for it. This will make our conversations rich!
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often. The questions move around depending on how many people are answering, so please scan the whole page for new questions now and then.



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- 4) Maintain CONFIDENTIALITY by not sharing names or personal information about the participants in your groups, sharing from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's story.
- 5) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.
- 6) 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!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Sumanth Raj and Barb Applepieski, welcome!

[Barb Applepieski](#) What a juicy topic!

[Sumanth Raj](#) Presence: to be observe the audience each and every opinion.

[Tim Hall](#) Can only be present 'live' for 20 minutes, but am looking forward to this immensely!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hi Tim Hall! Glad you made it

[Nadia Chaney](#) Posting the first question now

***[Nadia Chaney](#)**

Discussion Question #1: Let's start this session by creating our own practical definition of facilitative presence. What does presence look, feel, taste, sound and/or smell like during a group's process? When do you notice it? How is it different from (or the same as) stage presence, leadership presence or spiritual presence?



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[Deb Reynolds](#) It looks like open arms, tastes like chai, feels like a warm breeze, sounds like water running over rocks, smells like fresh baked bread. It is solid, yet porous. Firm, yet yielding.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Gorgeous Deb! Thanks for getting us started!

[Christabel Shaler](#) Yes. A porous container that is either hydrated or dry. The hydration allows participants to sink in. Dryness is more impatient and brittle. I feel dry when I am super tired.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Facilitative presence is related to a feeling of flow, for me. A kind of joyous calm. It doesn't have an agenda...but it still has a kind of directionality and juiciness

[Samar Shata](#) I feel my presence is like a warm embrace and an eagle eye that can see beyond through the window of the eye. Very still and accepting with no expectation

[Andrew Nalani](#) What my arms are doing, where my eyes are looking, how my voice is saying what it says and whether or not my stomach is clenched is part of facilitative presence. Facilitative presence is a) how I pay attention to my body as a source of information for what is going on in a group process and b) how I use my body to support or impede the group's learning process. It's funny to reflect on actually, but how I realize that how I feel in my stomach usually corresponds to a stage at which a group I'm working with is at (e.g. beginning, conflict or closure).

[Nadia Chaney](#) Wow. That's a powerful insight! I wonder if others sense their presence in a particular area of the body? I notice it in my posture and nervous system I think. But ... now that I'm reflecting ... I think my feet tell me a lot about how grounded/excited/connected/distracted I'm feeling

[Samar Shata](#) Totally agree Andrew Nalani. I feel it in my body is mirror my group nervous system

[Pamela Schuller](#) It like being a firefly a light that constantly moves so as to be in tune with the whole of the group. It is a dance of nuanced perception and intuition that encircles the group while caring and attending to all the dynamics that arise and also maintains the focus and learning.

Or like canoe in a river, focused on a direction while guiding the canoe through water currents,



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rapids, rocks, slowing down in quieter moving water moving water all the while going in a direction and intention, purpose and goals of the group.

[Andrew Nalani](#) *perception and intuition* resonates!

[Tim Hall](#) I think in an ideal world, it would feel like when I swing dance and am connected with the partner I am dancing with – a non-verbal connection that is a thrill to experience. I've never experienced this, but I imagine an even more ideal picture is to swing dance in a room full of people who also know how to dance really well – and all of us are aware of each other's place & trajectory in our dancing. And as a result, we are connected to our partners – and the entire room of dancers as well.

In a not-so-ideal world (e.g. when I am present to the reality that I'm not really in touch with the group... or that the group is in too many different places) it feels like I'm not part of the group, but sticking out like a sore thumb. As if I'm a man in the middle of a chicken coop trying to keep the chickens from running outside the fence.

[Nadia Chaney](#) I know this sore-thumb feeling...sometimes I feel as if I'm looking AT and being looked AT, and other times I feel like I'm just in a kind of moving song-soup with everyone

[Andrew Nalani](#) 😄😂 that's so true: "moving song-soup"

[Nadia Chaney](#) Weird. My reply disappeared. Ah, fb. Rewriting: I relate to the sore-thumbness sometimes. Can feel like I'm looking AT and being looked AT. Other times, though, it feels like we are all together in a moving song-soup 😊

[Barb Applepieski](#) It's there, you just can't see it! 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) ay ay ay. so strange

[Barb Applepieski](#) I love what everyone has said so far!

[Barb Applepieski](#) Presence looks like a moment in the rainforest with birds (who you cannot control, but I guess you could agitate them through loud noises), bugs, moss, and ancient trees. An awareness of what "is" and enough wisdom to see where the path is - even if it's as subtle as a few broken sticks and a line of sunlight breaking through the tree canopy.



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[Shilpa Setty](#) Presence is like notes in the music, high and low and sometimes a silence ... creating beautiful melodies which touches and brightens the inner light

[Nadia Chaney](#) that's beautiful, Shilpa

[Becky Suzik](#) Presence to me means letting go of my thoughts and planning energies to give over to what is happening, and help bring forth what is needed to reduce people's suffering, or disconnection from each other.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #2: When do you tend to lose your presence as a facilitator?
What do you do to get it back?

[Deb Reynolds](#) When there is too much information/stimulation coming at me. I need to take a time out - might be a group breath, or it might be a 5/10 minute break. And in that break, there may be checking in with a cofacilitator.

[Samar Shata](#) Hmmm when I feel highly judged. I feel all my energy run to my stomach. I come back through breathing deeply focusing on tbt breath

[Nadia Chaney](#) I find I lose my presence most when I haven't been taking care of my food, sleep, exercise routines.

[Andrew Nalani](#) When the group seems lost or during a conflict for example or when a provocative comment is made that catches me off-guard or when I'm hungry or tired from processing information from different sources--I become self-conscious and put myself down that I'm failing as a facilitator. When I am able to remember or rehearse my intention or highest wish for the group (if i have set it ahead of time*) it usually brings me back to center---my harder when I'm feeling frustrated with a particular process.



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[Nadia Chaney](#) So true. This is something Barb has really been helping me to remember in the last few months. The importance of having that anchor of a strong intention to hold onto when presence gets shaky

[Barb Applepieski](#) I lose my presence most easily when I don't give myself the opportunity to get EXCITED about the workshop ahead - my needs are important too, and I need to know why I'm there. It gives me the fire and spark I need to bring my magic.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Really. I feel this so much! Even just that moment to stop and be grateful when I get into the room makes a HUGE difference to my presence!

[Pamela Schuller](#) I think I lose it when adults (like classroom teacher) is talking to other adults while I am teaching the youth. I feel distracted and irritated and that the adults are setting a poor example for the students. Often I have stopped the class and directed my attention to the adults and ask if they could possibly talk elsewhere or later and it is distracting for me and that is usually okay to do... As I work mostly in school the past few years it is mostly the adults who are the problem. I also had to learn to take a full lunch time break and not work right through...which I think has occasionally led to impatience with a child and which leads me to feeling mortified. If I have the opportunity I will apologize to the child or youth.

[Andrew Nalani](#) AMEN. I tend to care so seriously about the space I'm creating and forget to allow myself the room to be excited, to discover to not know (I think this is partly out of the need to ensure safe boundaries)...and Nadia Chaney, yes to gratitude as a vehicle to getting back to ground (I'm using gratitude as a way to ground myself in my intention this year for "simplicity").

[Barb Applepieski](#) LOVE the gratitude idea. That excitement comes in many forms.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Andrew Nalani haha, yes! A solid foundational intention...and the more specific ones that keep me present TO something specific can come after

[Pamela Schuller](#) Yes the gratitude is a great idea. I have never studied why and how I do things in group facilitation. Though when writing a grant question are asked that really make me think about how what and why I do my work. I find this process of making visible in this type of PYE forum conversation really very helpful. When I used to be riding the TTC a lot to get to my jobs I remember working well with the solitude of the ride to reflect on the vision of the project and my relationships with staff and students. I



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try to go to have time alone before or after a day's work to reflect. I think the TTC is a great place for me to focus...it my alternate office/ focusing space.

[Becky Suzik](#) I lose my presence when I forget that I can't control the outcome of a group, I can only pre-plan, show up and set things into motion. I have to get out of the way and let things unfold. I can shape and steer a little, but If I start to judge how things are going while a gathering is still going, instead of stay in the moment and stay in co-creative energy, then my presence is gone and I'm part of the problem.

[Shilpa Setty](#) I lose my presence when I'm triggered, and I get back by telling myself to hold it for little more time until I get a break.. Also, when I realise that I'm not connected with what I am facilitating or engaging with group..I get back from it by looking for an experience within myself or from what is being shared by participants to connect and then it gets real..

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #3: When does your facilitative presence hold your group back? What might be the costs of presence in a group process? How do you manage these costs? I know this question seems a little strange...since we are always thinking of increasing presence...but I think it's important to consider the other side of things that seem to always be positive.

[Barb Applepieski](#) When my presence overwhelms the group, it's because I haven't given the group a chance to bring THEIR presence too! It's like being at a party where you're the only one who got to drink wine 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) Totally! omg. I have to look out for this.

[Andrew Nalani](#) ha! I really like this idea ...what to call it? group presence? I hadn't thought about presence like this, thanks Barb Applepieski!



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[Andrew Nalani](#) I have a natural inclination towards transition moments for a group (e.g. closure) and it's in those moments that I feel most useful as a facilitator. Because these moments can be emotionally tender or disorienting, my calmness, sensitivity and focus are strengths when i show up as a nurturer in my facilitative presence. But i've found that i check out as a facilitator when the group is settled into a particular stage and is not necessarily "transitioning". The cost has been that I fail to receive and experience lightness as I work with the group, understand the group in its complex experience of loss and arrival, and i'm left feeling isolated from the group (ironic for the kind of work centered around community). Working with a co-facilitator could be one way to grow through these costs, if this info with them and ask for their support.

[Barb Applepieski](#) Beautiful!

[Nadia Chaney](#) I had someone in one of my groups a few months ago tell me that my eye contact was intimidating. I think that I've developed an ease with groups and with intimacy with strangers that has seeped into my presence. It's something I'm trying to look out for...when people aren't used to working in an environment with a lot of connection and contact it can be strange...or even offensive.

[Andrew Nalani](#) Yes, I've experienced something similar with eye-contact in my work in Uganda, especially with adults.

[Andrew Nalani](#) ..since averting eye contact is a sign of respect !

[Nadia Chaney](#) that is a very serious consideration. I'm also aware of how my presence is enacted in postures / proximities that may not be appropriate in various contexts.

[Pamela Schuller](#) Interestinggood to be aware of

[Becky Suzik](#) sometimes, if I don't breathe and center myself my energy is too strong and I think I come across as too exuberant. It's hard to find a good and welcoming balance in my energy, that like Barb says, allows for others' energy too. Very good Barb 😊

[Barb Applepieski](#) haha... I can totally identify with that feeling!



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*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #4: What exercises or practices do you do to increase and/or maintain your presence in a group?

[Samar Shata](#) You mean during the group or before?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Either/both 😊 Thanks for clarifying!

[Samar Shata](#) Before, I meditate feel my intentions in my heart and visualize the group in the room.

During I drink water or warm drink very slowly that I can feel it

[Nadia Chaney](#) The best book on presence that I have, one I reread every few years, is Jeanne DeSalzman's Reality of Being. It's definitely in the realm of spiritual presence, but I've found it really helpful to keep me centered. Wonder if others have books they rely on to develop and increase presence?

[Andrew Nalani](#) I haven't read this book since the first time I encountered it in 2011, but "Leading Consciously" by Debashis Chatterjee and Peter Senge is a beautiful and insightful resource on bridging spiritual presence within corporate/organization change

[Pamela Schuller](#) On my way to the workshop I vision and think of the focus and ultimate goal of the gathering....Just before the group arrives or I go into the room on breathing deeply, and sending a prayer out along the lines.... that I will serve this group or community well and to truly remember to listen well. I have recently been reflecting on my personal mission statement. Maye I will remember it and read it aloud to myself. I think a personal mission statement is kind of like prayer.

[Shilpa Setty](#) I meditate to help maintain or build myself and that affects my presence, I have noticed that very strongly come across when I work with both children and adults.. while I am uncovering my layers and beliefs the way I accept or respond to different things in life changes and that experience adds to the presence while in front of groups.. I feel they feel more safe and invited open up and share their feelings and thoughts and once done I have seen them excited to



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try new things and compelled to participate more 😊 I have witnessed how the whole group feels comes together feels equal that everyone is learning from everyone and support each other's journey... Power of community

[Becky Suzik](#) I try to plan to address my needs ahead of the event, like bathroom breaks, water, tea and nibbles placed near me so I can physically be whole. As far as my spiritual energy, I feed off and feed to people around me. If I notice someone particularly disconnected, I may try positioning myself next to them, so we can have side convo to support her energy.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #1: You have a group of fifteen teenagers in an after school program. You are arriving after a tough day of work and are a bit grumpy. They are also exhausted from a day of school and it's difficult for them to focus. What would your state of presence be in this situation, and how would you manage it? What might be happening with the participant's presence?

[Barb Applepieski](#) I would try to get right into the moment to sense the situation clearly. Really take 5 minutes to breathe and "be" without asking the group to do anything with me or for me. Almost like when animals sit near to each other to sense each others intentions. I might test out ways to bring the group together that are low risk: bring out some pencils and paper and draw how my day went to see if anyone comes into that field with me.

[Pamela Schuller](#) I would form a circle with the group and experiment with breathing, asking how the day was...a check in. Or like Barb bring out the pencils and paper is greatand ask they would like to doodle or fold the paper. I like to play the harmonica, penny whistle and jaw harp. I have been tempted to bring it out play it for the youth or as maybe as they name their feelings I play a sound or tune. The jaw harp engages the breath so well that it could lead to conversation about breath and that is helps to focus on breath to calm and centre. I think I it such an interesting sound I wonder if using these small instruments as tool to gather, calm and center together with the group would be helpful.



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[Shilpa Setty](#) My presence would be strained too, I would get them to do a simple whole body relaxation where they sit comfortably with their eyes closed and I will get them to scan the whole body while I give instructions and rest on the love and light in the heart ... While I do it I get relaxed and I imagine them go through the same with me ... It doubles the impact..

[Becky Suzik](#) If there was a way for us to go outside and do something energizing like blow bubbles, hula hoop, or something that gets us out of our brain and into nature and a sillyish activity. Teenagers need grounding and also need to be reminded to play.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #2: You are facilitating a community meeting about a serious neighborhood issue that needs urgent resolution. Emotions are running even higher than you had expected. People are talking over each other, and even standing up or shouting at each other. Describe your ideal state of presence in this situation and how you might get yourself there.

[Becky Suzik](#) breathing. listening. recognizing emotions are high because people care a lot. then intentionally, if I am required to speak, bringing my voice down and calm.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #3: You are leading a team building session for a group of twenty young (13-18years old) members of a community art centre. Someone makes a remark that reminds you of a hard time in your life, and you find yourself thinking of that time and feeling quite emotional. What is the state of your presence in this moment, and what might you do to manage it? What course of action would you take next?



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[Pamela Schuller](#) I think my presence would feel overwhelmed and flustered. Possibly I might be vulnerable in the group and share a bit of how I am feeling with out blaming the person. More likely I would say... excuse me and tell them I need to check my notes about our activity as I am having a brain salad moment. Find a way to give myself a few moments space Then I would breath and centre. If the comment was possible offensive to be said in group at any time... then I would address that with the group . Which could mean reviewing the Agreements.

[Becky Suzik](#) It would depend on the energy of the group. If it seemed most people in the group took an emotional nosedive too, maybe we'd invest a little time in sharing and listening, to offer support via listening to each other.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #4: You are facilitating a week-long personal development seminar for teachers and staff at a local college. You're very excited because you feel you have a fabulous design, and you've had a lot of fun with this group before. When you arrive you find them a little low energy and running late. What is the state of your presence in this moment, and what might you do to manage it? What course of action would you take next?

[Barb Applepieski](#) I wish I could contribute more but I have to go! Thanks for a great assembly
Nadia Chaney.

[Nadia Chaney](#) So great to have you here, Barb! Talk soon!

[Pamela Schuller](#) A great question. I think a technique to engage the group to take and measure their individual temperature of feeling , mood or energy level. Then to suggest to the group a means of raising the energy , or grounding themselves in to the present. This makes me aware of the need to know more such technique to handle different group situations. Additionally,....when I realize what is happening with I might visualize for myself a gathering of the group energies



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into more cohesiveness, engagement and inspiration. Maybe I might sent out a prayer asking for help to work with the situation.

[Andrew Nalani](#) Sinking feeling, like a punch in the stomach. To reground, I'd reorient myself by asking "what can I learn from the group about their needs as they begin this journey" . I'd begin with a check in when people settle in and use a question like "what is something that surprised you on your way to the seminar this morning" plus asking participants to create a shape with their bodies that represents one hope they have for our time together. This kind of check in would allow us to begin with curiosity rather than judgment and foreclosure...which allows room to discover and engage with the process.

[Shilpa Setty](#) Honestly, as this has happened quite a few times. I would say its okay; and I use the extra time got to decorate the place and make it look more bright and inviting ...and once they are in, by meeting them at where they are start with a rhythm to get the energies together..

[Pamela Schuller](#) I really like that... That's life and it happens.....and kind of like treading water till everyone is is ready to swim together... Waiting , being patient with the flux of a day or group. Its possible a bit of the workshop might have to shortened and that will be okay and if there are notes for all the activities then it all works out.

[Shilpa Setty](#) True.. Thank you Pamela, it's very validating

[Pamela Schuller](#)



*[Nadia Chaney](#)

That's it for our ninety minutes this month! This has been quite a deep session! Thank you all so much for your insight, your authenticity and your commitment to this craft.

Next month's topic will be : AFTER MATH : what to do after your facilitation sessions. Planning to have all new case studies, too! Hope to see you there.



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PYE will soon post the transcript (I believe this is our 36th session!!) and this page stays open if you would like to add anything to any of the posts. We are always open to new topics for the upcoming sessions. If you have any ideas please feel free to post them on this page. If you enjoyed today's session please tell your facilitator, teacher, manager, social worker, group therapist, activist and social artist friends! Don't forget to check www.pyeglobal.org for upcoming trainings, too, there's some new ones just posted.

[Andrew Nalani](#) Asante sana!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Such a pleasure

[Samar Shata](#) Thank U

[Shilpa Setty](#) Thank you Nadia for an amazing session!!

[Pamela Schuller](#) Thank you 😊😊

[Becky Suzik](#) Thanks for a great series of questions. I love reading everyone's contributions. I wish I could be with ya'll live, but I'm grateful to be able to think and participate later. Hugs to everyone and you ❤️ Nadia!