
Parent and Caregiver Compassion Resilience Toolkit



Facilitation Guide

Outlined in this guide are some tips for facilitating in a circle, general facilitation tips, things to consider when working with a variety of personalities in a group, a note on co-facilitation and some things to consider when it comes to self-disclosure by a facilitator. In addition to this information, you can also find an [online podcast](#) with the learnings of the Rogers InHealth staff when it came to facilitating the Parent and Caregiver Compassion Resilience Toolkit . We hope these resources help you as you embark on your Parent and Caregiver Compassion Resilience Toolkit facilitation.

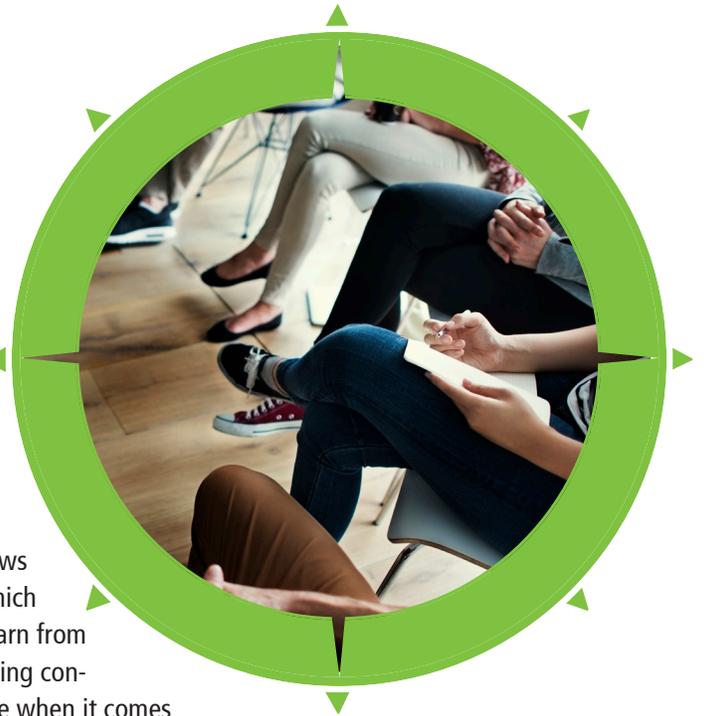
General Facilitation Tips:

- **Choose your space:** If you have the luxury of choosing your space, look for someplace that's comfortable, possibly with movable furniture. Choose a location and space that fosters connection.
- **Be prepared:** Make sure everyone gets any necessary information, readings, or other material beforehand. Because many of the resources contain information accessed online, provide material with weblinks and videos to people via email or other digital communication programs. If participants do not have access to the internet, printing the pre-reads to have available at your group would be helpful. Some libraries offer free or reduced cost printing for members.
- **Create a safe environment:** Group members need to be able to trust each other and that the space is safe from judgment and ridicule.
 - Help the group establish guidelines or shared agreements: The shared agreements are guidelines that help create privacy and safety for the entire group. As the facilitator, be sure to model this safety and confidentiality yourself.
 - Respect all participants: Each participant has something interesting to offer the group. No matter how much you may disagree with participants, allow them to voice their opinion if they are within your group guidelines.
 - Avoid giving advice: When you hear other group members start to do this, gently remind them that "this is a safe group, and we're here to listen, not to give advice." It may be helpful to incorporate this into your group guidelines as well.
 - Use encouraging body language and tone of voice, as well as words: Lean forward when people are talking, keep your body position open and approachable, smile when appropriate, and attend carefully to everyone, not just to those who talk the most.
- **Give positive feedback for joining the discussion:** Smile, reflect back group members' points to ensure understanding, and thank people for their participation.
- **Be aware of people's reactions and feelings and try to respond appropriately:** Observe not only individuals, but the whole group. How are people feeling? Being aware of the group's emotions will assist in diverting unnecessary emotional misunderstandings.
- **Be mindful of how you use your own story as a facilitator.** Use of self-disclosure by the facilitator should always be done with the purpose of deepening participants' learning. Reference our helpful tips later in this document when trying to decide whether to disclosure or not.
- **Be aware of time:** Stick to the agreed upon time frame for discussions and the allotted meeting as a whole.



Tips for Facilitating in a Circle:

Our agendas are designed to be facilitated in a circle format. Below are key components we use when facilitating our circles.



- **Arrangement of Furniture:** Put your chairs in a circle with ideally no furniture in the middle. This allows everyone to see each other, not just the facilitator, which fosters a sense of community and opportunities to learn from each other. While, as a facilitator, you may be presenting content in a new way, everyone in the room has expertise when it comes to building and maintaining compassion resilience.
- **Use of a Talking Piece:** This is an object that is used to indicate who is to be sharing in the circle. When someone is holding the talking piece, the rest of the group is charged with just listening to that individual and not worrying about a response or interrupting. Talking pieces originated from Native American tribes, originally in the way of a [talking stick](#). We recommend you find a talking piece that works for your group. Often, we use a stuffed animal or stress ball.
 - In the agendas in the Toolkit you will see sharing mentioned as *Talking Piece* or *Popcorn*.
 - *Talking Piece* sharing references when you pass the talking piece around the circle for all members of the circle to respond to the question. At any time in the circle, including when the talking piece is passed from person to person, participants always have the right to not share. Remind participants in the first few circles that they can “*pass or share*” when the talking piece is handed to them. As a facilitator, you may also want to model “*passing*” for the group, so as to affirm it as an acceptable option.
 - *Popcorn* sharing references when the talking piece is tossed around the circle to those interested in sharing. Typically, *popcorn* is used to solicit 3-4 responses from the circle.
- **Centerpiece:** We recommend putting some object in the middle of the circle for participants to rest their eyes on when they need a break from looking at others. Anything pleasing to look at can work as a centerpiece. We also suggest you place any core content items you have covered in the center of the circle for the group participants to have as a reference as needed. Also, include group agreements you have created, family goals and values of the group in the center of every circle.
- **Fidget:** Though not required, many of our participants shared how helpful it was to have items to occupy their hands during our meeting time. These could include a variety of stress balls, pipe cleaners, fidget sticks, or other small items that can be squeezed or manipulated.

Facilitating Group Dynamics:

The hard part of facilitation is handling discussions that involve multiple people and their personalities. This is never easy. Here are some of the common challenges that you may encounter, and some tips on handling them with compassion:



- **The talker:** This person answers most if not all questions and typically responds first in the group. Remind everyone in the group of the guidelines and that this is an equal participation group. Ask others to share. If the problem continues, you can limit responses to a certain time frame (e.g. one minute) so others have time to respond. If necessary, talk to the person outside of the group about your concern. It may also be beneficial to include a group guideline such as, *Step Up and Step Back*, explaining to the group that if they know they are a frequent sharer to do their best to take a step back and if they know they are a bit more reserved to challenge themselves to speak up more.
- **The non-talker:** This is the quiet person in the group who does not share. If you think non-talkers just need a little prompting, watch for signs that they might want to participate and ask them to share at that time. Be sure to affirm them after responding and reflect back their thoughts to encourage future responses.
- **The tangent-starter:** This person loves to get the group off track by starting personal or random tangents. Feel free to go off on this tangent occasionally if you think it is appropriate, but also firmly bring the group back on track when needed. If the problem becomes excessive, again, talk to the person outside of group. Affirm them in what they do contribute and let them know about the challenge you have in trying to get through all the material in the allotted time frame if the group goes too far off topic on numerous occasions.
- **The insensitive person:** This individual gives advice, cuts people off, rolls his eyes or does other things to upset members within the group. This person is dangerous to the safety of the group! Remind everyone of the group guidelines and definitely have a one-on-one conversation outside of group to let the person know how important a safe group is, and what they can do to help make that happen.

Co-Facilitation:

Co-facilitation is when a group is facilitated by two individuals instead of one. There are lots of advantages to having groups co-facilitated. Co-facilitators can take turns and support each other, relieving some of the challenges that come with facilitating by oneself.

Co-facilitating can provide another pair of eyes and ears when analyzing what is happening with individuals and the whole group. You can bounce ideas off each other if any tweaks need to be made, such as suggesting a break or restructuring the group setup to improve the atmosphere. Additionally, co-facilitating is useful if one facilitator needs to step out of role to take part in the discussion, have a break or when back-up is needed in cases of tension, conflict, or confusion. Someone not actively facilitating can pay more attention to the emotional atmosphere of the group.



When selecting a co-facilitator some things you want to consider include:

- **Schedule.** Do your schedules allow for you both to be present for most, if not all, of the groups planned?
- **Diversity.** What diversity do you represent as a co-facilitation pair (in terms of race, age, sex, family dynamics, including ages of children, etc.)?
- **Honesty.** How comfortable are you being honest with each other?
- **Experience.** Does at least one member of the co-facilitation pair have experience facilitating a group, especially one that has more dialogue than teaching? If not, what support do you need to access to help you learn as you go?

Working with a co-facilitator is a different experience than facilitating a group on your own. Here are some tips to consider to help your co-facilitation be successful:

1. **Check in with each other in advance.** As soon as you know you will be working with each other, get together to plan. You need to agree on the timing, who will gather supplies and what roles and responsibilities you each have.
2. **Tell your co-facilitator what you expect and need.** The first time you meet, tell each other what you expect from a co-facilitator and how you work best. Everyone has a different understanding of co-facilitation and this needs to be shared before you work together.
3. **Check in with each other before and after the group.** Before the group you need to check in with each other to divvy up the agenda and if any adjustments need to be made since you last spoke. After the training you need to check in to share your thoughts on how the session went, what needs to change in the following session, and what could be done better next time. Because 'the unexpected' can always happen, checking in before and after a session is critical. This is also a great time to affirm each other.

4. **Support your co-facilitator.** While your co-facilitator is leading an activity, you should be fully attentive to what he or she needs and what the group may need that you can best do. Helping your co-facilitator hand out paper, support a confused working group or tape something on the wall, can help them be more focused on the task at hand and keep up the energy of the group.
5. **Don't interfere.** While your co-facilitator is leading an activity, don't interfere or contradict them (unless it is critical to the learning). You need to stay focused on what is happening so that you can support your co-facilitator without being an interference or burden.
6. **Set personal and team goals.** Before you facilitate, name 1-2 things you want to remember and work on in the session. If you share these with your co-facilitator, you can also get feedback on these goals at the end of the session. Setting team goals is also a great idea.
7. **Stay on time.** Always try to stay within your delegated time frame. The sessions are often scheduled for a short amount of time, where every minute is valuable and accounted for. If you use more than your allotted time, it will impact your co-facilitator's activity and the learning that needs to happen.
8. **Affirm each other.** Whenever possible and true, affirm your co-facilitator. Everyone feels nervous about facilitating. You need to take every opportunity to tell your co-facilitator what they are doing well.
9. **Work as a team.** At all times, you want the learners to see the two of you as "a team." Support each other, affirm each other in front of the group, and weave the work your co-facilitator did into your work. You want the learners to think "Wow, you work well together!"

Adapted from [Global Learning Partners](#).

Self-Disclosure as a Facilitation Tool:

Self Disclosure – The process of sharing personal information about yourself with group participants.

This can be done verbally or non-verbally and on deeper or superficial levels. When done appropriately, there are some benefits to using self-disclosure as a facilitation tool. Some of these include:

- Modeling the type of sharing that the facilitator would like to see by participants.
- Deepening the group’s learning by helping connect content to real life examples.
- Making the facilitator more relatable and less abstract.
- Serving as validation for others.



However, when not done well, self-disclosure can have a negative impact on the group as well. Some negative consequences could include:

- **Serving as a distraction to participants** – Sharing by the facilitator that is shocking, off-topic or overly personal, may leave participants thinking about what the facilitator shared instead of the content/sharing covered after.
- **Stunting future sharing by participants** – If the sharing the facilitator engaged in shows a strong preference for a certain belief or opinion, this could stunt the sharing of participants who have a different belief or opinion than the facilitator.
- **Impacting credibility as a facilitator and group leader** – Too much sharing about difficulty engaging with the content as a facilitator could lead group members to thinking the facilitators aren’t qualified to be leading the group.
- **Leaving participants feeling they need to take care of the facilitator instead of their own learning** – When facilitators share something that is overly personal and perhaps something they haven’t fully processed themselves, it can leave participants feeling the need to care for the facilitator instead of their own learning.

Tips for Self-Disclosure

Before choosing to disclose to participants, consider these points:

- **WAIT – Why am I telling?** – ask yourself this question ahead of time and only share when your “why” is for the good of the participants’ learning
- **Be intentional** – When preparing for the group ahead of time, think about how you may use your personal story to benefit the participants’ learning.

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- **Consider the impact** – Think about what kind of impact your sharing could have on participants in your group.
 - **Be brief** – Your share should be concise and to the point. Most of the time sharing should be done by participants, not the facilitator.
 - **Use “I” statements** – Your story is just that, yours. Using I statements will help you avoid over generalizable statements.
 - **Check with your co-facilitator** – Before you do any significant sharing with the group, you want to let your co-facilitator know. Not only will it insure you two are on the same page but they can also serve as a sounding board as to whether it is something helpful to the group for you to share.