

Facilitator Roles, Approaches, & Strategies

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Roles Descriptions

Lead Facilitator

The lead facilitator starts and ends the workshop session with an introduction statement and conclusion statement that remains the same each week. They will make sure everything in the workshop session runs smoothly behind the scenes and assist when needed. They will be assigned to either the Oral Storymaking Planet or the Storymaking through Movement Planet, depending on their preference.

Facilitator

The facilitator assists with the lead facilitator in making sure the workshop session runs smoothly and is there to jump in if the lead requires backup help for any reason. They will be assigned to either the Oral Storymaking Planet or the Storymaking through Movement Planet depending on their preference.

Artist

A local artist from the community, who preferably has experience with kids. They will be assigned to the Writing & Drawing Planet where they will assist and encourage kids to complete the worksheets assigned that session. Letting the kids' imaginations and storytelling go wild, the artist will also teach kids how to draw, if the kids wish for it, and require assistance in their artwork.

Volunteer

The volunteer will go around to various planets and assist the facilitators and artists as needed. Originally starting at the Launch Pad, the volunteer will then seek out the busiest planets and ask where and when assistance is needed, and perform backup tasks to make sure everything is going in a smooth and orderly fashion.

Approaches to Communication

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset is a psychological perspective that emphasizes that everyone is always growing, changing, and learning, so there is no such thing as failure. Making mistakes is a part of the process, so there is no need to compare oneself or label things as good or bad. (Dweck, 2016) Facilitators are encouraged to help participants develop a growth mindset.

Because there are multiple ways to encourage participants without using the term "good" (which may imply that some work is better than others), facilitators should think of alternative forms of encouragement.

Alternatives could include:

- » "Thank you for sharing" - pointing out details you notice
- » Asking questions about the piece a participant is working on.
- » "I'm really interested, can you tell me more?"
- » "I'd love to know more about..."
- » "Your ideas are really interesting, keep going..."
- » "I was reading your work and would love to know more about..."
- » "I love that you are using your imagination!"
- » "I love that you are really thinking about this (could give example)"
- » "Tell me about your picture, I'm really interested in it!"
- » "I love the (lines, shading, colors, use of...)"
- » "I can see you really love to draw (?), tell me about that..."
- » "I love how you've really been working and playing with this."

Active Listening

One way facilitators can build good relationships with participants is through **active listening**.

Some active listening practices include (Raising Children Network, 2021):

- » Giving full attention to participants
- » Showing interest by asking questions
- » Showing that you are trying to understand, by briefly summarizing or repeating what has been expressed
- » Listening without interrupting, judging, or correcting
- » Showing attentiveness using non-verbal body language, like facing a participant when they are speaking

Flexibility and Adaptiveness

Facilitators should be 100% present and engaged. The needs of participants will vary greatly. This means that facilitators need to be ready to adapt quickly and offer a variety of solutions during workshops. The key to all of this is understanding how children and youth of diverse backgrounds, age groups, values and beliefs, gender identities, and abilities require a variety of resources.

For example, if participants are struggling with understanding particular ideas, a facilitator needs to be able to rephrase their examples so that they accommodate as many participants as possible. In order to be better prepared for these dynamic scenarios, facilitators should try to review the worksheets and prompts prior to starting the workshop session.

Offering participants the opportunity to choose from a range of options should be another focus during every workshop activity. This includes participation in group activities and independent writing. There is no need to enforce a certain outcome; even if a child writes nothing at all, or chooses in the end not to share their writing, that is okay.

Creating an Inclusive and Safe Space

Leading Discussions

When leading discussions, facilitators should try to keep conversations balanced, ensuring all participants get a chance to share. If a participant is not participating, facilitators can offer them the choice to participate in the conversation. For example, a facilitator could ask a participant, "Would you like to share anything?" The goal is not to single out participants. Instead, facilitators should always extend an invitation to participate and reinforce that participants always have the choice to decline the invitation.

Facilitators should always be mindful of keeping participant voices at the center of conversations and story-making. Although facilitators are encouraged to share their own stories to connect with participants and encourage them to share their own, facilitators should find opportunities to have participants lead the writing direction.

Disability Justice and Overall Accessibility Needs

There may be some children and caregivers with access needs prior to the workshop program. Provide contact information, and space (such as in the sign up form), to share access needs prior to the first workshop's date.

- » Allow for space during the introduction for anybody to state their accessibility needs in general or for that particular day. Provide examples by having the facilitators state their accessibility needs that session or lack of accessibility needs. These can range from "I didn't have the best of sleep last night so I'm a little tired and may be slower than usual," to "I am hard of hearing and may ask you to repeat your sentences," or "I have memory loss and may not remember names very clearly, but will do my best to remember you as people for your individual personalities."
- » If the child or caregiver is ESL (English as a Second Language!), allow for space (in the sign up form) for the caregiver to address this in case there is an ability to have a translator or somebody involved in the team who speaks their language, or at the least, allow them to have extra attention so that they are able to participate in the workshop at full capacity.

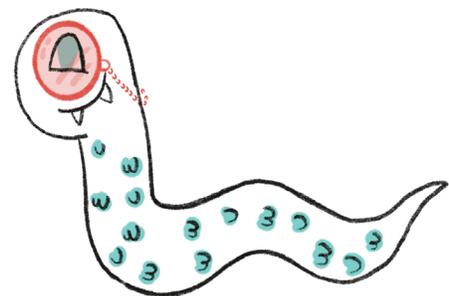
- » Allow for the ability for children or caregivers to approach the facilitators or volunteers about their accessibility needs if wanting to speak privately about them. If this is the case, ask if this information is alright to disclose with the other facilitators/volunteers. If not, respecting their decision to personally come to you and if possible, (for the lead facilitator and facilitator) to choose the planet the child frequents most so that you, the trusted person they decided to disclose their accessibility needs with, remains close to them when able.
- » The understanding that not all children and caregivers are able to interact the same way. Do not disrespect and discourage kids and caregivers from interacting in the means that is best for them even if it means that they are non-verbal throughout the sessions, are only able to participate in half the session before needing a break (and perhaps leaving the session entirely), or cannot provide direct eye contact.
- » Understanding the need to be flexible depending on the group of kids and caregivers and their needs.
- » **How to interact with somebody who is non-verbal:**
 - Talking in regular language to them; just because they are non-verbal does not mean that you must be.
 - Respect their decision, or inability, to talk to you at this given moment. It is no reflection on you as a person or their trust in you. Your main priority should be to cater to the children and their caregivers regardless.
 - Asking them to nod/shake their head to answer questions, or to make hand/body gestures so they can communicate in alternative formats.
 - Asking them to write/draw to communicate in alternative formats and ensuring that there is paper and writing tools in each station to allow for this.

» **How to do motion based activities (Storymaking through Movement Planet) despite kids or caregivers' physical disabilities or pain tolerances that day:**

- Encouraging everybody to only do the movements that make them feel good and that if a movement makes them uncomfortable or is painful, to stop what they're doing, shake it out, and either wait for the next movement to start or to make up a movement themselves while waiting for the next movement to start.
- Encourage everybody during the introduction statement to only do what they are able to do and feel comfortable doing. Pushing yourself a little outside of your comfort zone is fine, but not to the point that you feel upset.

» **How to interact with somebody who does not enjoy physical contact:**

- To not assume that all children or caregivers enjoy touch.
- To note that touch is especially hard from strangers, even if it is a slight pat on the back for a good job or a reassurance hand hold.
- To not touch anybody purposely without their permission.
- Instead of offering children and caregivers high fives for a job well done, clap instead and encourage them to clap for themselves and each other.
- To understand that for many, touching other people is a trigger and should not be done unless done with consent, such as if a child wishes to hug you. In that case you can accept or deny the hug depending on how you feel as well!



» **How to interact with people who cannot hear you:**

- There are a number of reasons why somebody may not be able to hear you. The first being hearing loss, the second being sound cancelling headphones. These are not exclusive reasons. Regardless of the reasoning, respect the child or the caregiver and treat them as you would any other person of hearing.
- Note that if a child or caregiver decides to use sound cancelling headphones, it is so they can fully participate and engage in the space in the means that feels safe to them. This being said, to fully respect their decision, because they wish to be in space, they just need this accessibility to participate.
- Write/draw to communicate in alternative formats and ensure that there are paper and writing tools in each station to allow for this.
- Communicate through hand and body language.
- Use visual cues, such as the emotion guides, to get an understanding of where they are at and how they feel.

» **How to interact with people who are ESL (English as a Second Language)**

- Asking them what method of communication is easiest for them.
- Have alternative forms of communication, and if desired, two forms of communication. For example, speaking verbally and writing at the same time.
- Again communicating through hand and body language as well as visual cues.

» **Sharing Circle Arrangement**

- Providing chairs in one section and a carpet for the other section. Participants can choose where to sit. This being said, please do not arrange chairs and carpet areas at random.
- Reasoning: For accessibility purposes, as many children and caregivers may feel more comfortable, or may require chairs to participate. As well, it lessens the stress of needing to look up and down at the next participant depending on their sitting level (reduces dizziness + disorientation).

Anti-Opressive Framework

What is it and why should we use it?

One of the best ways to address the various political, cultural, social, and economic factors that drive inequality and injustice is to use anti-oppressive practices (Baines, 2011)

During these workshops, anti-oppressive practices could help facilitators create safe spaces for children and youth to share their stories. The hope is that participants feel comfortable and free of judgment and have their voices heard and not silenced.

Critical self-awareness is crucial to anti-oppressive practice. It allows us to be responsive to the diverse and changing needs of those we work and interact with, as well as forcing us to question our own worldview, and how we may be reinforcing or participating in oppression.

What does it mean to work from an anti-oppression framework?

- » Actively working to acknowledge and shift power towards inclusiveness, accessibility, equity, and social justice.
- » Ensuring that anti-oppression is embedded in everything that you do by examining attitudes and actions through the lens of access, equity, and social justice.
- » Being conscious and active in the process of learning, and recognizing that the process, as well as the product, is important.
- » Creating a space where people are safe, but can also be challenged.

How Can We Be True to Anti-Oppressive Practice?

- » Understand that we always have more to learn than we have to offer.
- » Own our mistakes and apologize for them. It's not about our intent, it's about our impact. (Avoid saying things like "I didn't mean it that way"/ "That's not what I meant." Instead, say "I'm sorry that what I said/did hurt you.") Remember, the best apology is to change behavior.
- » Cultivate critical self-awareness, both as individuals and as a group. Interrogate our assumptions.
- » Be aware of the language you use. Be mindful of pronouns, avoid binaries (i.e. gendered language - defining something as "feminine" or "masculine"/ "boys will be boys" etc.).
- » Know when to stop talking and listen. Give the people we serve the space to speak and be heard; don't talk over them. Be aware of how much air time you occupy.
- » Understand that when someone from a minority group speaks out against something or seeks empowerment, this is not an attempt to disenfranchise or oppress another group.
- » We are constantly learning and growing, and making mistakes is part of the process.

Trauma-Informed Approach



For many children participating in this project, certain memories and experiences related to the pandemic may be traumatic. Taking a trauma-informed approach to leading your workshop will prevent the inadvertent re-traumatization of kids, while ideally promoting healing and recovery.

What is trauma?

- » Trauma is prevalent in our society, including for children, youth, and families
- » Trauma is when someone experiences an event or situation where they felt very threatened. This event or situation surpasses a person's ability to cope

- » The pandemic may have been a traumatic event for some; having this awareness before facilitating the Lost & Found workshop is important

How does trauma impact children?

- » When trauma happens, it can make it difficult for children to feel safe in what may seem like a safe situation; children adapt to cope
- » These adaptations are normal responses to abnormal experiences
- » This could look like a child having difficulty following directions, not speaking, struggling to build relationships, or missing sessions

Being trauma aware means...

- » Knowing that trauma impacts a child's brain, body, emotions, and behaviour
- » Viewing a child as a whole person, not just seeing their behaviour
- » Wondering what happened to this child, not what is wrong with this child
- » Seeing that undesirable behaviours are attempts to soothe emotional dysregulation (e.g., fidgeting, pacing, shouting out, ignoring, not following what is being asked, leaving the space), often done without awareness

Main Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. Safety

- Creating safety, both physical and emotional
- Consistency and structure help to create safety; an agenda helps to reduce surprises and helps children know what to expect for the group session
- Starting and ending with a grounding activity

2. Trustworthiness and Transparency

- Ensuring your words and actions match
- Do what you say, say what you do

3. Peer Support

- Group environment
- Shared experience of the pandemic

4. Collaboration

- Everyone is responsible for a trauma aware environment
- Reduce power differentials - all pandemic experiences are real, valid, and equal

5. Empowerment, voice, and choice

- Create space for children's voices
- Allow choice - children should never be pressured or forced to participate in any component of the group session