Meeting Facilitation –Strategies and Phrasing

A. Start the Meeting

Key meeting steps	Possible phrasing...
Start on time	Out of respect for the people who were able to make it on time, let's go ahead and start. -or- It seems that we're missing a lot of people. Would the group like to start or would you like to wait (5 minutes) before we begin?
Welcome	I'm glad you all made it! Nice to see you.
Clearly state the purpose of the meeting and desired outcomes	The purpose of today's meeting is to... During this meeting we will... By the end of this meeting we will...
Check for understanding and consensus on the purpose and outcome	Does that sound like what you thought our meeting was about? Any changes to that plan?
Establish ground rules/norms for the meeting	What rules will help ensure that we stay on track and on time today? What agreements do you want to set for this meeting to support everyone's participation? Here are a couple of ground rules we normally have...should we add any today? What behaviors do we need to demonstrate if we are to have a successful meeting?
Delegate and clarify team member roles (chairperson, facilitator, minute taker, timekeeper, norms keeper,...)	Since we rotate roles in this meeting, let's see who wants to... (XYZ) It's our practice to share the role of taking minutes; who wants to do it for today's meeting?

B. **Common nonproductive behaviors and facilitation strategies**

General strategy: Describe what you are observing and check in with the group or invite different behavior from an individual or the group.

Silence/nonparticipation	**Strategy:** If a participant seems timid, ask a question in an area that the individual can speak with conviction. Highlight the importance of full participation. Invite specific participation. **Phrasing:** "It is important that we hear from everyone." "You haven't had a chance to share your thoughts, what ideas do you have?" "How do you feel about this?" "Before we move on I would like to hear from X about this." "I am noticing the energy in the room has dropped. What can we do to get things going again?"
Monopolizing/dominating	**Strategy:** Avoid looking at senior participants or individuals who tend to dominate. Explicitly call on people. Acknowledge contribution and then call on someone else. Privately chat with the individual. **Phrasing: "**Thank you for your contribution. I'm concerned we haven't heard from others. I am going to ask you to hold your comments until the end so that others can be heard." "That's helpful for the group to hear. Are there other ideas/ responses/ thoughts from the rest of the group?"
Intimidating/discounting	**Strategy:** Refer to the ground rules. Use "active listening" so the person can relax knowing they've been heard, then invite others to participate. Acknowledge their position, emphasize that everyone may feel as they do. Explain that the meeting's success requires that everyone be heard. Describe the impact of the behavior on the meeting. **Phrasing:** "I'm going to remind the group of the ground rules about respecting each

	other's ideas." "It sounds like you don't think that idea will work. Can we hear from others as well?" "I notice that you're discounting other's ideas rather quickly. Please summarize what the other person has said before you state your points." "I am afraid your good ideas are not being heard because of the tone of voice you're using. Could you restate your opinion in a more neutral way?"
Overly agreeable/no firm position	**Strategy:** Be direct. Ask everyone to describe their position on the issue. **Phrasing:** "I notice that people are not stating opinions one way or the other. How can we make sure that this is a safe space where everyone can express their positions?" "To achieve our meeting purpose and desired outcomes, we will need to be able to share our opinions even if we are not sure others agree. Are we hearing everyone's true positions on this issue?" Another approach is to ask the group if either choice would be equally good, or if indeed the choice doesn't really matter. (They may be overly agreeable because this isn't an important topic.)
Negative/critical	**Strategy:** Prevention – invite people who have something to contribute or gain. Assign them a role. Refer to the group norms. Talk with the individual privately. Acknowledge the impact on the meeting. Paraphrase the positive only: **Phrasing:** If they say, "This is a waste of time. Can we move on and accomplish something worthwhile?" You can say, "So this has taken a while, and you'd like to move on." "So you're uncomfortable with this discussion, and you're ready to move on the next part…" or "So you're unhappy with the direction; do you see any possibilities since others would like to address this…?"
Side-tracking	**Strategy:** Prevention-establish clear

	purpose and objectives. Write them on the board and refer to them. **Phrasing:** "I notice that we may be moving onto a different topic. Let's remind ourselves of the purpose and desired outcomes of our meeting." Or – The group seems to be moving to topic X. Are we through with the previous topic? Can someone summarize what the group agreed to do?
Side conversations	**Strategy:** Brief side conversations may be normal but if disruptive intervene. Try pausing and creating silence while standing by the involved participants are making eye contact with them. **Phrasing:** "It looks like there is an interesting discussion going on here. Is there something that would be helpful to share with the group?"

C. Process Checks: Keeping a meeting on track

Use once an hour at least and just before breaks for longer meetings. Encourages innovative thinking and conveys forward movement.

	When to Use	Sample wording
Check the Purpose	Conversation is stuck or people seem confused	"This is what we agreed was the purpose of our meeting. Given our discussion is this still clear?"
Check the Process	To verify the approach is working	"We agreed to use this tool. How do you think this approach working? Should we try something else?"
Check the Pace	Meeting is dragging or moving too fast or people look frustrated	"Is this session dragging?" "Are you feeling rushed?"
Check the Pulse	Members look distracted or tired	"Is anyone feeling like they have dropped out?"