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## Facilitating study sessions

### Notes for facilitators

If you are new to facilitating, the brief guidance here will help you get started - you will learn most of the skills needed along the way. For further advice you can contact Lizz Roe: [Lizz@Woodbrooke.org.uk](mailto:Lizz@Woodbrooke.org.uk) or 0121 415 6787

Each session follows the same pattern. To avoid repeating information that will quickly become familiar to you, these two pages explain things that apply to all sessions. Refer to them as you need to.

**Numbered Session sheets:** These contain the particular details you need to run each session, including:

- the purpose of the session
- the resources you need and any duplicating instructions
- details of how to run each activity

**Resources:** You will need a kit that includes scrap paper and pens for writing, and a pack or two of Post-it notes - minimum size: 3 x 5 inches. For some sessions you also need large sheets of flip chart or similar-sized paper, and marker pens. It helps to have more than one colour.

**Welcome and worship:** Welcome everyone at the start and settle in silent worship for about 10 minutes.

**Introduce the session:** Remind the group of the session title and say a little to explain what the session is about. Include the Purpose of the session, the titles of the activities and the ways of working.

**Introduce and run each activity:** Feel free to use your own words where spoken wording is suggested. Take a full part in all activities yourself.

**Speaking in the group:** Except for a Go-round, sharing is best done not by going round the circle in turn but in any order as people are ready to contribute. Inform the group at the start how much time there is to share, including silence. Asking people to take responsibility for sharing time is more helpful than timing people strictly to their 2 or 3 minutes each. Whatever the method for sharing, always explain that it is OK to pass or not contribute.

***Creative listening*** A way of sharing thoughts, one person at a time as led, with spaces between and without commenting on what others say.

***Go-round*** Like creative listening but shorter - a minute or so each at the most. Make this clear, and start by modelling what it means in practice.

***Worship sharing*** A more reflective, more spirit-led version of creative listening. It needs more time with opportunity for more silence.

***Thought shower (or brainstorm)*** Encourage a free-flow of lots of ideas and write up everything offered. When ideas slow down, begin to group similar things together or prioritise, depending on the nature of the activity.

***Discussion*** Do your best to keep a balance between those with a lot to say and those who find it less easy to speak in the group. When working in two groups it helps to have a facilitator with each group.

**Focus sheets:** The resources for most sessions include photocopyable Focus sheets and/or slips in large type. For a whole group, place Focus sheets on the table or floor in 4 directions so everyone can read them. Focus slips for pairs or small group work can be given to participants to take away with them.

**Timing the session:** It helps to keep to the times given, but slippages invariably happen. In any event, keep to your agreed finishing time. Remind people that time keeping is a shared responsibility of the whole group.

**Drawing on expertise in the group:** Whatever your level of experience as a facilitator it is useful to be aware of the range of skills and experience in the group. Find ways of encouraging people to contribute their knowledge or expertise, including asking for support or help when you need it.

**Closing worship and Notices:** Ask the group to settle into stillness for about 5 minutes after the last activity of the session. Then remind people about the date/other practical details of the next session, and give the session title.

**Social time before or after the session:** Not essential, but a good way to get to know one another better.

**Keeping communication going:** Encourage people to be in touch if they have to miss a session, and see that absentees are informed of any changes or plans for future sessions. Keep the rest of the meeting informed of what you are doing (especially if you are going to Yearly Meeting Gathering).

### Ways of helping inclusivity in the group

**Experience and knowledge:** Avoid making assumptions about what people already know or have experienced before, e.g.

- When introducing an activity for the first time, check everyone understands.
- Explain terms such as ‘thought shower’ or ‘creative listening’ (see above).
- Check everyone knows what acronyms stand for before using them.

**Particular needs:** Avoid assumptions about the best way to meet a person’s particular needs, e.g. sight or hearing. Invite people to make their needs known and to say what works best for them. This will help everyone share in the responsibility of making the group inclusive. Other things that help:

- ***Furniture:*** arrange the seating in a circle, with a table in the middle for focus sheets and thought shower or feedback sheets
- ***Giving verbal information:*** take your time, speak clearly
- ***Writing up contributions from the group:*** read out what is being written and face the group when speaking
- ***Working with handouts:*** read aloud as well, or invite a volunteer. Make available some copies in large print on the first occasion handouts are used with a group, and thereafter as required
- ***Reading aloud in the group:*** invite volunteers rather than expect everyone to participate