

TRAINER MOTIVATION: KNOWING YOURSELF

Overview

The focus of this section is on what goes into being an effective trainer and peacebuilder. It includes reflecting on the personal and professional qualities of both.

Being an Effective Trainer

Learning occurs in the circle of relationships between the trainer and participants. It is affected by the attitude of the trainer, the learning environment the trainer and participants create, and the motivation of participants. When facilitating it is important to know your own style of interacting with people and dealing with conflict because these impact on how you interact with participants in the workshop. It becomes particularly important when you elicit critical feedback from participants during evaluation periods. Participants need to feel secure enough to share their observations without feeling they may be punished for doing so. Being a good trainer means being able to be with people and receive their critique without interpreting it as a threat and reacting in a way that creates a destructive cycle of communication.

Each of us has had good and bad learning experiences. The good ones leave an impression on us; they inspire us or change the way we think about the world or act in it. The bad ones we generally try to forget, although they can be very instructive for what not to do in a similar situation. Drawing on those past experiences is a useful way to identify what kind of trainer you want to be. Here are some questions to help do that.

Think back to the very best trainer or facilitator you ever had, and a time when you felt you had a significant learning experience:

- ❖ Who is your favourite trainer?
- ❖ Why is this person your favourite?
- ❖ What were the trainer's characteristics that made your learning experience so effective?
- ❖ What was it about the situation that added to the learning experience?

Now, think back to the very worst training experience you have ever had:

- ❖ What happened?
- ❖ What were the trainer's characteristics that made the learning experience so negative?
- ❖ What was it about the situation that was problematic?

Team Training

Teams of facilitators can work very well to balance training approaches, communication skills, gender and ethnicity as well as someone with whom to share preparation and facilitation work. If working in teams, it is important to agree on the content of the workshop, be clear on what training methods you will be using, who does what task and how you can best work together. Training in teams also provides facilitators with the opportunity to model good working relationships and cooperation.

Personal Approaches to Conflict

Many tools are available to help trainers be aware of their own behaviour. For peacebuilding, knowing how you react to conflict and communicate with people is very important. By knowing how you usually react, you can then try and change or adapt your conflict style in order to constructively address the underlying conflict issues and respond appropriately in the specific situation and cultural context.

Spiritual and Mental Health

Working in conflict zones is very stressful. Peacebuilding takes a long time and frequently efforts fail. Working as an agent for peace can mean that you work with people that your family, friends and community view as the “enemy.” Peacebuilding therefore requires both inner strength and external support. People doing peacebuilding work, whether they are local partners, NGO field workers or trainers need to be supported and cared for, as well as those with whom they are working. Caring for your own spiritual and mental health as a trainer and helping others develop habits of care for themselves is an important part of being a peace agent.

Working for Reconciliation (pp.44-47) contains an extensive discussion of spirituality and mental health. This discussion includes several suggestions for helping to prevent the negative effects of stress that include burnout and post-traumatic stress. It is important to remember that trauma and stress follow different display rules in different cultures; trainers need to be sensitive to this. Suggestions for maintaining personal and group well-being in *Working for Reconciliation* include ensuring time for sharing, meditation, prayer and silent time, and regular celebrations.

Below are a number of additional suggestions for how to maintain your personal health. Many of the spiritual and theological resources developed in this manual are based in a

religious – specifically Christian – commitment. Many co-workers will have other religious or humanitarian commitments. We can encourage them to explore and share their own traditions for personal mental and spiritual health. Knowing what our commitments are and revisiting them frequently in the light of recent experiences can help keep those commitments alive for us. Some ways to express a general commitment to humanity are identified below, following the list of practices.

Contemplation and meditation. From a Christian perspective, reconciliation is first and foremost God's work, as St Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20. The sheer scope of what is dealt with in peacebuilding, the tangled relationships, ability of people to be both victims and oppressors, and long histories make conflicts very hard to sort out. Contemplation and meditation are ways to keep closely connected to God in order to carry out God's work (see Luke 22:39). Contemplation is about learning to wait on God. Instead of being an activist, always wanting to act now and think later, contemplation requires that we make a space to still our own noise and listen for God.

Most people need to begin contemplation with very short periods of time (around 10 minutes). They can become more accustomed to it and are able to contemplate for longer periods of time with practice. One way to begin contemplation is to ask for God's help to come to stillness and hear what God has to say. Focus on a single mental image that brings peace while waiting to hear something new. It usually takes most people time to reach complete calm, but this is an important part of contemplative practice – getting there is half of the discipline. End the period of contemplation with a prayer of thanksgiving, no matter what happened during the contemplation. Being thankful creates a relationship with God, and a relationship with the space that contemplation opened to us. It is a reminder that we are not self-sufficient, but part of God's work.

Contemplating personal wounds is another type of contemplation that can be helpful when dealing with great suffering and wrongdoing. This suffering and wrongdoing can be thought of as the presence of evil. People get worn down in conflict settings, and engage in destructive behaviour towards themselves – they may start bending rules or not telling the truth. One might say that evil in these situations insinuates its way into the hearts and minds of people trying to do good. To keep this from happening, it is important to know your own wounds. Life experiences for all of us involve people and events that wound us. Time may have helped us move beyond some wounds, but even those considered healed leave scars. Wounds can play a positive and negative role in reconciliation and peacebuilding. They can help us accompany others in pain and confusion through our own understanding of the same experience, but they can also block us from engaging with others suffering if they are too recent or deep. The Christian story of Jesus sharing his wounds with Thomas (John 20:24-29) is an example of the positive role that wounds can play. To contemplate our own wounds involves becoming very quiet and gazing internally on the wounds of our past. This means knowing what those wounds are and acknowledging how much they are a part of us. The next step is entering those wounds again to find what no longer controls our lives as well as points that are still painful. Probing gently, recall how these wounds have helped heal others, and give thanks for this gift. A final step is putting our wounds in the story of the suffering and death of Jesus. One way of doing that is through the devotional practice of the Stations of the Cross (see Module 2, Exercise 2.6 Stations of the Cross.). Attending to our wounds is neither an act of self-pity nor masochism. It is another way of recognising our limits in the face of overwhelming evil around us and of sustaining ourselves.

Keeping a journal. Another way to give yourself an opportunity to reflect is through keeping a journal.

Hope and optimism. Maintaining personal hope is an important part of a healthy spiritual and mental life. Hope can infuse your actions with energy, and inspire those around you. Some questions to consider when contemplating hope are: (adapted from Ayindo *et al.*, 2001, p.87):

- ❖ Who do you know remains hopeful even when circumstances are very difficult?
- ❖ How do you think they keep hopeful?
- ❖ What do you do to take care of yourself?
- ❖ How do you keep hopeful?

For Christians, a distinction can be made between optimism and hope. Optimism can be understood as something that comes from us – it is within our capacity to create change and make a difference. Hope comes from God – it is something that comes to us and sustains us, even when a situation appears impossible. Optimism pushes us forward and hope pulls us ahead. One way to experience and sustain hope is to *celebrate the small victories*. Reconciliation and peacebuilding work rarely bring large victories, but there are small ones that we need to keep on the lookout for.

Support networks. It is important for peacebuilders to have communities or networks for support. These allow people to share their experiences with others who are going through similar experiences and can empathise. This gives peacebuilders an opportunity to share their struggles as well as successes, their fears and hopes, sorrows and joys. They also allow peacebuilders to share lessons they have learned with each other in order to eventually become better peacebuilders. One way to set up a support community is to have annual meetings with peacebuilders in your region. Another way is to set up an e-mail list for people to share their experiences with each other.

Need for safety. One of the most basic survival needs for humans is the need to feel safe from harm. Reconciliation and peacebuilding work during stages of hot conflict and immediately after is often devoted to creating safety. Without safety humans cannot flourish.

Need for belonging. In the hierarchy of human needs, belonging comes shortly after safety is achieved. By nature humans are interdependent beings. Belonging is one of our most important ways of relating to others. Peacebuilders often work with people who were internally displaced or are refugees, or people who were otherwise excluded (e.g., families of those who were imprisoned or disappeared). Developing a sense of belonging is essential to rebuild the human community.

Reframing and transformation. Reframing is about seeing a situation from a new perspective. Like the discussion of communication skills in Module 5 highlights, humans interpret the information they receive. What this means for peacebuilding and reconciliation is that we have to let go of a past that cannot be retrieved and create a future that may be very different. Helping people reframe is an important step to make conflict transformation and new life possible.

Altruism. Altruism is part of belonging. Recognising that we humans are interdependent brings us to realise that we are only completely ourselves when we reach out to others. Altruism is that commitment to other people. In peacebuilding and reconciliation, altruism is about building and repairing human bonds, which make new relationships and solidarity possible.

These four areas are just part of what motivates people. Because commitments are a source of motivation that both provide a source of strength outside of us and inner strength, they require special attention.

Questions for reflection: What types of commitments do you have? What commitments do those you work with have? How are these commitments expressed in your work? How do you keep yourself mentally and spiritually healthy?

FACILITATION AND TRAINING COURSE

Overview

This section outlines the role of a facilitator and why facilitation is important in an interactive and participatory training methodology. The section includes facilitator tips, and a variety of exercises related to re-energising participants, dividing the larger group into sub-groups, and different ways of reporting back to the group.

Defining the Role of a Facilitator

Developing and implementing a training that is participatory and interesting is not an easy task. As a trainer, you will have to play multiple roles, sometimes as teacher or facilitator, at other times as mediator or participant. Think about the times that you had a good learning experience (see Being an Effective Trainer in Section 3.3). What was different about that experience? How did the teacher or trainer interact with you as a participant? What roles did he or she play? It is likely that this person involved you as a participant in the learning experience, paid attention to both the process and the content of the training, and pushed you to learn in a variety of ways. Training individuals about peacebuilding requires many of the same experiences.

A *facilitator* is someone who is concerned more with the process than with the content. The content is *what* the group is talking about, while the process is *how* the group talks about the subject (Hope and Timmel II, 1995, p.53). A facilitator acts as an advocate for process but stays neutral in terms of content. *Content neutrality* means not taking a position regarding the issues for discussion or not having a stake in the outcome. *Process advocacy* means advocating particular processes that are inclusive and open and that allow everyone to participate in the discussions.

A facilitator has four functions:

- 1) To encourage full participation;
- 2) To promote mutual understanding;
- 3) To foster inclusive solutions; and
- 4) To teach the group new thinking skills (Kaner, 1995).

Skills of a Good Facilitator

Good facilitators need a variety of skills to perform their function well. The following list (adapted from *Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw*, 1998, pp.138-141; Kaner, 1995, pp.48, 49, 53) describes some skills of a good facilitator:

- ❖ Asks **open questions**. A facilitator asks questions that invite participants to reflect and share with the group, like: “What do you think about x?” or “How do you feel about x?” rather than closed questions that only require yes or no answers, like “Do you like x?”
- ❖ Encourages and equalises participation. For example, keeping a list of people who want to speak, and then creating and sharing with the group an order for people to speak is a technique (called “**stacking**”) for equalising and encouraging full participation. (See Section 3.5 for additional techniques that encourage and maintain full participation, especially when talking about difficult subjects or dealing with difficult individuals.)
- ❖ Allows group members to answer each other’s questions.
- ❖ Summarises discussions and reviews the main points at the end of a discussion.
- ❖ Acknowledges different viewpoints.
- ❖ Is alert to sensitive issues.
- ❖ Listens rather than talks.
- ❖ Keeps the group focused on content using good process.
- ❖ Acknowledges various points of view by “**tracking**” the different lines of thought on a particular topic. **Tracking** involves naming the different conversations taking place (e.g. a conversation about roles in peacebuilding, a conversation about effects of a peacebuilding project) by summarising and then asking participants if the summary is accurate. By tracking the various lines of thought, you are acknowledging that you are aware of the issues and themes participants want to discuss, and it assures participants that you will not lose track of their issue.
- ❖ Uses techniques such as **intentional silence** to allow participants time to reflect before or after speaking. The ability to tolerate five seconds of silence (which seems much longer than it actually is) is the most important element of this facilitator skill.