



Daily Practices of a Facilitator

3rd Thursday Assembly

Silvia G. Webster: Today's topic is: Daily practices for a Facilitator. The topic should become clear as we delve into it, but please ask if you have any clarification questions.

Here are our goals for today:

- 1) To explore which personal practices support our work as facilitators
- 2) To exchange ideas about what challenges and inspires us in this work
- 3) To gain new insights about what can support our work as facilitators
- 4) To improve our understanding of the online world and positive digital behaviour
- 5) To connect, recharge and have fun

In order to achieve the goals (posted below), here are some suggestions for agreements to make our time together work well. Please be sure to add what you need or want as an agreement **AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS.**

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.
- 2) Share at your level; Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully disagree with each other.
- 3) Show your presence, by **LIKING** and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to **REFRESH** your browser fairly often.
- 4) Answer any questions in the **COMMENTS** below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open **NEW** questions in new threads.
- 5) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.
- 6) Please add any agreements that you feel are missing to this list.

Silvia: Ok, shall we get started? Here is our check-in question:
If you had a super-power today, what would it be?

Silvia: I will start us off. If I could have a superpower today, I would want it to be teleportation. Feeling particularly homesick with all the images of Brazil on television and wishing I could just stop by quickly and hang out with family and friends to soak up the atmosphere.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Hi Silvia! If I had a super power today, it would be the ability to convert all the thoughts that serve me well, into pieces of art, as they occur.

Silvia: I like that so much Nilisha! Thank you!

Joanne Lauterjung Kelly: I like both those powers. What came to mind for me was the ability to put my hand on someone, know what kind of music they needed in that moment, and play them the perfect song to make them feel empowered.

Silvia: Yes!

Nilisha: Wow! What an amazing super power to have, Joanne!

Laurie Marshall: My superpower would be to transform tribal and ideological identities to the bigger story of identifying with all living beings.

Silvia: Can I have all your superpowers? These are great!

Katie Jackson: If I had a super power it would be the ability to read 100 books a day. And remember them all...

Tanaya Thomas: If I had a superpower, it would be to turn any given moment into a dance party. But only a short one of course, for safety reasons.

Silvia: Welcome Tanaya - this too is a keeper...you all are good!

Shilpa Setty: My superpower would be to vanish things that pollute nature.

Laurie: Of course, I want to fly. Always have, always will. Flying in my dreams makes me feel alive in my soul.

Daria Sukman: Garden Queen - I have a garden of unlimited, healthy, organic food available to everyone. Everyone has to eat healthy you know! In the end, we cannot eat money!

Silvia: Welcome Daria! Feel free to jump in and answer any of the questions posted so far.

Silvia: I will start us off with some questions - let's see how these go and I may throw in a scenario or two if we have time:

QUESTION 1: When you are at your best in facilitation, what does it feel like?

Nilisha Mohapatra: When I am at my best, the entire experience feels enabling, hopeful, alive and also vulnerable.

Silvia: Thanks Nilisha. I love that you added vulnerability to this list. I also find it so grounding to my experience.

Laurie Marshall: I'm best when I have created the clear container for each person to risk expressing their authentic selves. Sometimes I do this with clear steps, like Charlie Murphy did in our training in June. Sometimes I don't know how I do it, like in Sarajevo two weeks ago when the kids wanted to keep their cool card so bad, but somehow they ended up feeling safe and valued.

Katie Jackson: I am at my best when I have taken the time to really center myself and get grounded, but then allowed myself the ability to be spontaneous.

Joanne Lauterjung Kelly: These are all great, and resonate for me, too. I feel my best when I've done my prep work and can then let go and truly be in the moment and responsive to what's going on. It's amazing how much preparation goes into being spontaneous!

Tanaya Thomas: It feels like synchronicity, even when things don't always go as planned.

Silvia: I am loving reading these and connecting to the feelings they evoke as I think of all the great times I've had facilitating! Thanks for perking me up already!

Katie: I remember when I was at school, we had to give little speeches as part of our English literature exam at age 16, one day I totally forgot to prepare a speech and spent my lunch time with friends who I loved. We walked into class late and the teacher decided to make an example of me by calling me up in front of the class and asking me to go first. I was totally unprepared but I just made the instant decision to speak from the heart, as I had really had some open hearted time with my friends. It was the best presentation I ever did, and I got the best mark in the class for it. Exactly Joanne - that is what I am trying to get at, that feeling of knowing you have the tools you need and then just letting go and flying.

Joanne: Yes, Katie, and your story shows the importance of reflection before expression. You'd clearly thought deeply and processed with your friends to then express yourself.

Silvia: I am at my best when I feel prepared but can keep that awareness in the background so I connect with the participants and with what is needed in the moment. It is when I feel the most joy!

Laurie: Flying, yes, one of the superpowers I want. And preparing first, so the flight can occur. I just came from the Sarajevo Peace Event where much of the presentations were people reading academic papers from their computers. It was not flying. PYE needs to train the Peace Movement to spark the fire.

Nilisha: Silvia, it is having the same effect on me. Am staring at my screen with a big smile on my face, since I am able to relate to all these feelings. Absolutely love Katie's feeling of spontaneity, and going with your heart. I've found that feeling whenever I've been challenged by a group and have had to pitch the training at a whole new level- very different from the plan.

Katie: Yes Joanne I did, and I also felt really safe and seen in that moment, so I could really be myself. I think there is something in that too, really doing work on yourself, continually, to be able to work through issues that might be holding you back. We can't always be in with friends when we facilitate so how do we achieve that? I remember a great facilitator once telling me that his whole practice was changed when he had the revelation that having been bullied as a child he had a desperate need for people to like him, and it really wasn't serving the youth he was facilitating. It was a real weight off his shoulders to be able to let go of that.

Joanne: Oh Laurie, that's so sad! Yes, peacebuilding needs heart and soul as well as head!

Laurie: I have the request to meet the wonderful people who are playing here. I just sent you all friend requests. Maybe one or two sentences would be helpful. I live in California and use art for peacebuilding, work with [Create Peace Project](#).

Silvia: What a great discussion and this is only our first question! Just posted question number 2.

Shilpa Setty: I so resonate with you all, the feeling of being prepared, being grounded, and letting ourselves to be spontaneous to what is happening with the participants. I sometimes feel, how did I know what I had to say to that completely unexpected situation or question?

Silvia G. Webster: QUESTION 2: What aspects of the work are the most draining and the most regenerating?

Laurie Marshall: The most draining is finding funding. The most regenerating is seeing empowerment, with people believing in themselves.


Silvia: Thanks Laurie - I hear you! Also interested in finding out if there are any aspects of the facilitation work itself that you find draining.

Katie Jackson: I find this really interesting Silvia- I identify as an introvert, so I love spending time with people, but I do also find it very draining and need some time to myself to recuperate after any session. For me, the trick to that is about knowing my limits and respecting them. Taking time out in the evenings or during breaks to be just me, on my own with my thoughts. That really helps! In fact, it is crucial.

Tanaya Thomas: The most regenerating is the moment when the group turns the corner or shifts and everything is different. I am also an introvert Katie and have been trying to work on knowing my limits and respecting them.

Silvia: Thanks Katie - you're already providing some insight into where we are heading soon.

Laurie: Thanks for that focus, Silvia. I am a flaming extrovert, and with that comes the need for me to stop and pay attention to what I'm feeling. I have to deliberately build that in or I skip over my inner experience, often with negative consequences.



Silvia: Draining: super long days which involve prep, the actual facilitation, and sometimes evenings - which happens especially when I travel. Although I love all the connection that happens there - my body feels the strain of long days.

Joanne Lauterjung Kelly: A lot of what I did this past year was pilot new programs, and it was both regenerating and draining. Draining because it involved a lot of research which means time in front of the computer, and required a lot of concentration to watch workshop participants to monitor how things were going. And I live overseas and don't speak the language (much) so everything goes through an interpreter. One workshop I did was in a more rural area of the country, and I got to borrow a motor scooter to get around. It was really fun and regenerating to just ride around after the workshop every day and explore. Like Katie, I need time alone to regenerate.

Katie: You might like [this article](#) Tanaya: Ruby is one of the most inspiring introvert facilitators that I know. Making us introverts proud.

Silvia: Inspiring: Much like what you said Tanaya, I love seeing the "clicks" happen in the group and just enjoy meeting the people that show up. Their energy feeds my own.

Nilisha: I think I agree with Katie, on that. As a facilitator when I constantly have to keep my awareness and energy levels high, not having some down time is draining and eventually takes a toll.

Tanaya: Oooh thank you Katie!<3 I actually wondered in the past if perhaps because it was draining that facilitating wasn't something I should be doing but it sounds like I'm not the only one who encounters this.

Nilisha: What I find most regenerating is when participants start believing in the power of art and integrating it into their lives, that pushes me to practice my art more, for me to expand my horizons. It is like a feedback process. The more you give the more you have types.

Tanaya: Participants who are uncooperative or have challenging behavior can also be draining for me. Yesss Nilisha! I love the description of it being a feedback process.

Joanne: Nilisha, I like that comment. It reminds me of when I started out, I tried too hard to "carry" the workshop for participants. But getting them to own it early on not only helps give me energy, but it ends up being more successful for them.

Laurie: I brought PYE facilitation to an after-school program in Sarajevo where the kids didn't know each other and wanted to smoke and socialize. They would come in at different times and I had a great challenge getting agreements and focus together. It came, but the resistance was draining.

Nilisha: Thank you, Tanaya and Joanne! I'm glad you could relate to it. I've actually found almost everything in facilitation to be a feedback process. It's quite fascinating.

Katie: Resistance as a drain - I am interested in that Laurie, I need to think more about what it is that is so exhausting about that, but I agree, there is something exhausting in trying to get where you are wanting to go when others are not on the same page. But then I sometimes wonder whether I should try to get more on their page - I guess there is a meeting in the middle that happens and that is when the magic starts.

Nilisha: I love how you have articulated that, Katie.

Shilpa: I facilitate at an after school program as well, and I feel regenerated when I see the group totally involved and wanting to give their best, and in turn start challenging us.

Laurie: Katie, I agree about letting the resistance guide new, unforeseen steps. Perhaps what's tiring is the grip of control that isn't working.

Shilpa: I totally relate to Laurie about how draining it is to get the young people to work together and like themselves. With my group they say you should use a scale otherwise we won't listen to you (of course I don't) but I am still in the process of getting them to listen and participate together.

Joanne: I recommend looking up 'motivational interviewing' if you're working with youth who aren't listening or participating. It's a technique used in therapy that has some interesting applications in facilitation work.

Tanaya: Tell me more Joanne.

Joanne: It's a style of asking questions that helps people look at their own ambivalence towards change, and to help them clarify for themselves where their motivation really lies. Sometimes we choose (consciously or unconsciously) to not change because there's some reward we're getting for holding the status quo. I'm also a big fan of appreciative inquiry, so for youth who aren't cooperative, finding something that's working for them to build on can unlock so much potential.

Tanaya: Nice! I just found a plethora of info on google thanks Joanne

Daria Sukman: Vicarious trauma. Listening to all the stories and how to not let it affect me in an adverse manner.

Katie: What an interesting concept Daria - I haven't heard that term in that way before but I totally resonate with it.

Silvia: I love how refreshing the page provides a great metaphor for how sometimes we all need to refresh ourselves in this work...so in this spirit, here's question 3: **WHAT SPECIFIC PRACTICES DO YOU MAINTAIN THAT FEED YOU AS A CREATIVE FACILITATOR?**

Katie Jackson: I love the idea of keeping your creative spirit alive. One of the LIFEbeat facilitators here in the UK is making a piece of art every day for the next 30 days. That's a lot of work, but just doing little things to keep your creative spirit alive, like keeping pens and paper and craft materials around are really nourishing in my opinion.

Silvia: What I find connects me to my wholeness and settles my brain chatter is being active, in my body, moving through the city on my bike, and getting a chance to express myself through dance. I don't think I could do this work without it.

Joanne Lauterjung Kelly: For me, I need to be around other creative people and be constantly learning new things. Mindfulness is also really important - my favorite practice is walking meditation. Theater and vocal improv are also forms of mindfulness as well as opening up channels. Journaling - reflection and processing.

Laurie Marshall: I draw, color, paint and dance everyday, plus have on-going projects with young people most all the time.

Katie: Oh yes Joanne - mindfulness is definitely one. Taking time to rest your mind is just so important for me. I like what Silvia said because I am starting to realise more and more that when I go for a jog, or ride my bike, that is a form of open eyed meditation if I want it to be.

Joanne: Katie, I love that - "open eyed meditation." It can be easy to think being centered means having our eyes closed, but isn't the ultimate groundedness to be centered AND connected to others at the same time.

Laurie: Love the walking meditation, Joanne. Singing, too. And Katie, thank you for the wonderful articles you have at your fingertips. I look forward to reading them.

Nilisha: To keep my creativity alive I like making doodles often. I make at least 7-8 a week.. Be it a quote I like, a thought I have, a feeling- I convert them into doodles.

Silvia: It sounds like having personal creative practices is also very important and I completely agree. I have recently started to draw again and also keep a file which I call "stuff I write" where I empty thoughts and ideas. I have found it to be so much fun and nourishing.

Dr-Floralba Arbelo Marrero: I run to debrief myself and disconnect from all that is going on around me. Sleep is another great relaxer...I find myself waking up with fresh ideas in the early hours of the day, I make sure that I sleep at minimum 8 hours a day and by 7pm I disconnect from telephone and media.

Joanne: I'm taking some songwriting lessons while I'm in Seattle with Linda Waterfall, and one of her practices is to be in nature without doing anything. She said to just sit and do nothing outdoors - not hike for fitness, or weed the garden. I love that.

Nilisha: Mindfulness practice. I love that! I have been trying something in the mornings for a month now, which is to write slowly. One word at a time. The brain usually rushes to group words together, interpret and

lend imagery. I try to allow one word at a time to rise, to feel it. It is challenging. But I try to slow down my mind!

Laurie: Wa-hoooooooooooooooooooo. I'm flying through this rich conversation.

Silvia: BIG Smiley Face!

Joanne: Nillsha, Rebekka Goldsmith has a cool exercise when she leads vocal improv workshops where people think of a song from their childhood and sing it very, very slowly - one note at a time, walking through the space. You end up with this amazing sonic soundscape, and for me it felt like a form of walking meditation, but in community.

Laurie: I practice "Passage Meditation" as I go to sleep. Which is to say a poem one word at a time, meditating on each word, just like Nillsha does her writing meditation. Love the idea of writing meditation. The poem I usually say is a prayer my father wrote for his three daughters: Dear God I go to bed, with thanks for all this day. Please God spread all my love, on other folks I pray. And bless this lovely world. Protect it with your might. I'll do my best to help. And, now, dear God, goodnight.

Nilisha: Wow! That is amazing. I can totally visualize how soulful it would be. Thank you for sharing this with me Joanne! I hope to connect with Rebekka soon and learn it. Maybe I could sing out the few words that emerge on my page.

Silvia: One thing I have also been loving is our London practice group. We are all taking a deeper level Facilitation Training and meeting in-between the sessions to sing, practice and just hang out. It's been fabulous!

Daria Sukman: Doing my art - sketches, doodles, writing. It all starts there and may expand into something later. Meditation helps too- I listen to guided recordings.

Shilpa Setty: I do heart centered meditation, time to connect with the divine within myself, mostly everyday to refresh. And also like Katie said I keep the materials handy to make drawings, crafts, jewellery with my 8-year-old

Silvia: Time is flying so here is:

QUESTION 4: This is a two-part question. a) What is your biggest obstacle to staying nourished in your work? b) What ways have you found to work with these?

Katie Jackson: So much flying is happening today! Hmm, great question, sometimes I wish I understood this more as I do sometimes find myself totally drained. For me, the way London works is an obstacle. I fill my diary weeks in advance and then I don't have the ability to listen to my body and decide what activities I have the

energy to do. Sometimes I feel totally drained but then I look in my diary and see a few days full of activities ahead of me, followed by work, and I just feel totally daunted.

Dr-Floralba Arbelo Marrero: I limit the projects I work on (intentionally) and listen to the people I work with, especially youth and children, they have great ideas that nourish my work. I am still learning how to really listen to them and then I reflect on what they contribute. Yet I must say that purposely balancing my time is one of the toughest things I have had to do, it is not popular as there are so many great opportunities out there but if I am to remain effective, this is the only option for me.

Silvia: Dr-Floralba Arbelo Marrero - thank you for sharing this. It is one of the things I really struggle with. Thanks for sharing your experience.

Daria Sukman: Back to basics and not over thinking things - getting rest/sleep, proper meals/nutrition, stay hydrated, breaks throughout the day. It keeps me grounded on a more intuitive level so that I can help others.

Silvia: a) finding quality processing time/debrief time (if working with a co-facilitator). This time sometimes just slips away and I miss it. b) This is far from being a perfect solution yet, but intentionally including this time in the planning and design of the session helps.

Joanne: a) I'm fairly isolated because of where I live (Myanmar) and this style of work is very new so I'm having to find ways to advocate for it. b) I take lots of opportunities to network and find people to talk to. I found MASC on LinkedIn - lots of great resources online (including PYE!), and this kind of online forum is great. I wish I could meet up with other creative facilitators in person, but every little helps.


Daria: It boils down to setting boundaries and understanding our own capacities as facilitators. How can you help others when you don't have a clear (but evolving) understanding of yourself? The work is circular and the self-care is in continuous process. Especially with group dynamics and going through the phases.

Shilpa: Keeping up my energy always is quite challenging, so I make sure to get good sleep, which helps. And also perk myself up by looking at trees, flowers, little children, etc

Clarinda R. Laforteza: POYO ~ a Place of Your Own

Silvia: We are just a few minutes away from ending the facilitated part of this conversation so here is our **CLOSING QUESTION: What is one new practice you might explore as a result of this conversation that will support your work?**

Daria Sukman: Revising my self-care routine to help me set new goals to get out in community more - travel internationally, while still doing my art and making an income. My prosperity comes from within first, then the rest will work out. As a single parent it can be hard and have to be realistic.



Silvia: I will come back to this chat to reconnect with the wonderful images and feelings you all evoked in me when I need that extra boost of nourishment. thank you!

Tanaya Thomas: All of the things! Particularly what resonated with me was motivational interviewing, singing a song from childhood slowly, and incorporating more mindfulness into my day. Working on a proposal for a girls rock camp soon, looking forward to possibly implementing some of these things.

Shilpa Setty: I would like to learn the exercise which Rebekka Goldsmith leads, the vocal improv workshops where people think of a song from their childhood and sing it very, very slowly - one note at a time, walking through the space. This activity sounds very interesting. Nilisha lets get in touch with Rebekka soon.

Clarinda R. Laforteza: Simplify, seek silence & support. Start, stay sensible.

Silvia: It's time to close the facilitated part of this discussion - which for me has been off the charts awesome! I felt physically uplifted and appreciate the depth and wisdom in your comments. This chat will be my new go-to place for facilitation nourishment. I also want to give a shout-out to Nadia Chaney who set up this wonderful format and who is certainly doing her magic in Uganda! Thank you all and stay here for as long as you like!

Katie: Thank you so much to everyone who took part! I really enjoyed this conversation. We are really evolving and experimenting with these conversations. One of our goals is to really start to experiment with groups online and to start to understand what it looks like to behave well to each other in an online environment. We feel that this will be of huge benefit to the young people we work with. With that in mind, it would be great if you could fill out [this online survey](#) about the facebook chats for us. All comments are very welcome and we read and talk about every response we receive (they are totally anonymous if you want them to be).