

PREPARING *The Space*

FACILITATION TIPS & TRICKS

READINGS/RESOURCES:

- Facilitation Station Session (p. 108)
- *Alchemy: The Elements of a Collective Space*, a tool from Southerners on New Ground (SONG)
- Training for Change (many tools available on their website)

Manage expectations by conveying that **all** parties are responsible for the success of the meeting, not just the facilitator. As facilitator, you have a particular responsibility to prepare adequately: familiarize yourself with the content of the session and read the suggested readings.

Tailor the curriculum to your needs. Prepare anecdotes relevant to your conditions, place, group culture, past or current work, and supplement with additional readings, activities, or materials. Expect to model candidly answering the prompts or questions you are asking the group to engage.

Your role is to ensure democratic participation and engagement, and to foster space for hearty dialogue, debate, and nuance. Use the curriculum to create a process that specifically suits your group and connects to your work and needs (as opposed to facilitating a one-off workshop that you never come back to).

Your role is also to track the group and figure out why folks may be disengaged or quiet. If someone is talking all the time, address it directly by saying something like, "You've shared a lot, and I want to make sure others have a chance to speak."

Prepare materials and visuals beforehand and decide if you want a note taker, time keeper, or other support roles from others. This will clarify roles and give people various ways to engage with the material.

Check-ins at the beginning of meetings and workshops allow everyone the space and time to speak, briefly share how they are, and provide a heads up to the group if there is other stuff going on. This allows people to share their truth at the beginning; otherwise, folks often end up being disruptive. A one-sentence or even a one-word check-in can help people start the time together. Do not let check-ins eat up all of your time though.

Group agreements can be helpful. Consider suggesting a few to start off with so you don't spend 30 minutes creating a laundry list of agreements. Expect disruptions, tangents, and sticky moments, and engage them directly. This will ensure that they aren't just symbolic wallpaper.

Watch the energy: yours and that of the group. If you need to take a break or collect yourself, or if the room needs to take a break, do it!